GUITARS, CARS, WATCHES, WINE & THE DELUXE LIFE

GUITAR AFICIONADO

MAGAZINE

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PEDAL STEELS AND STEEL WHEELS

JAKE PEAVY
PITCHING FOR **MUSIC AND PHILANTHROPY**

KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS
A BLUES GUITAR SAFARI *in the* BLUEGRASS STATE

TOKYO TREASURES

THE ART *and* CRAFT OF THE ESP CUSTOM SHOP

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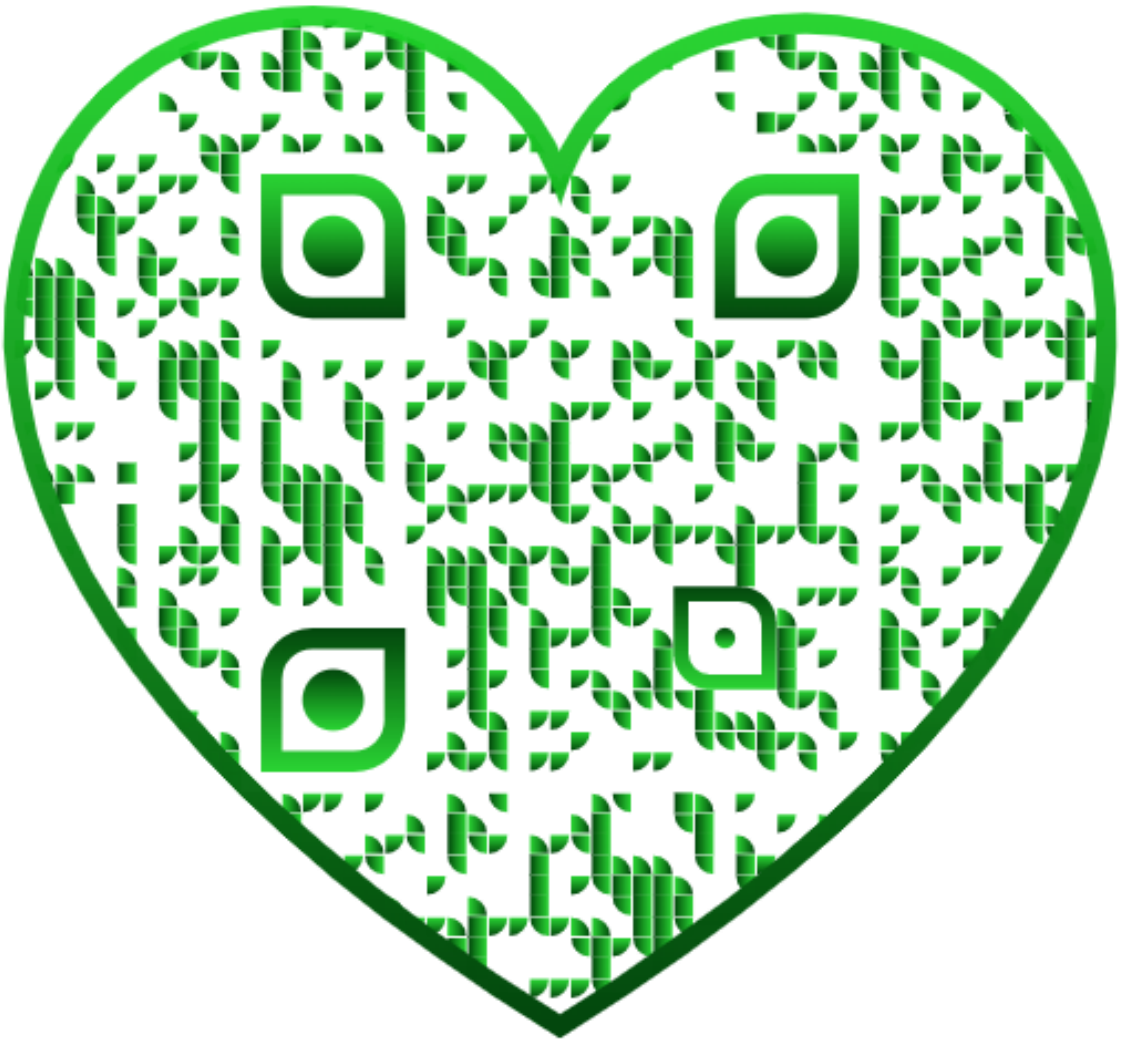

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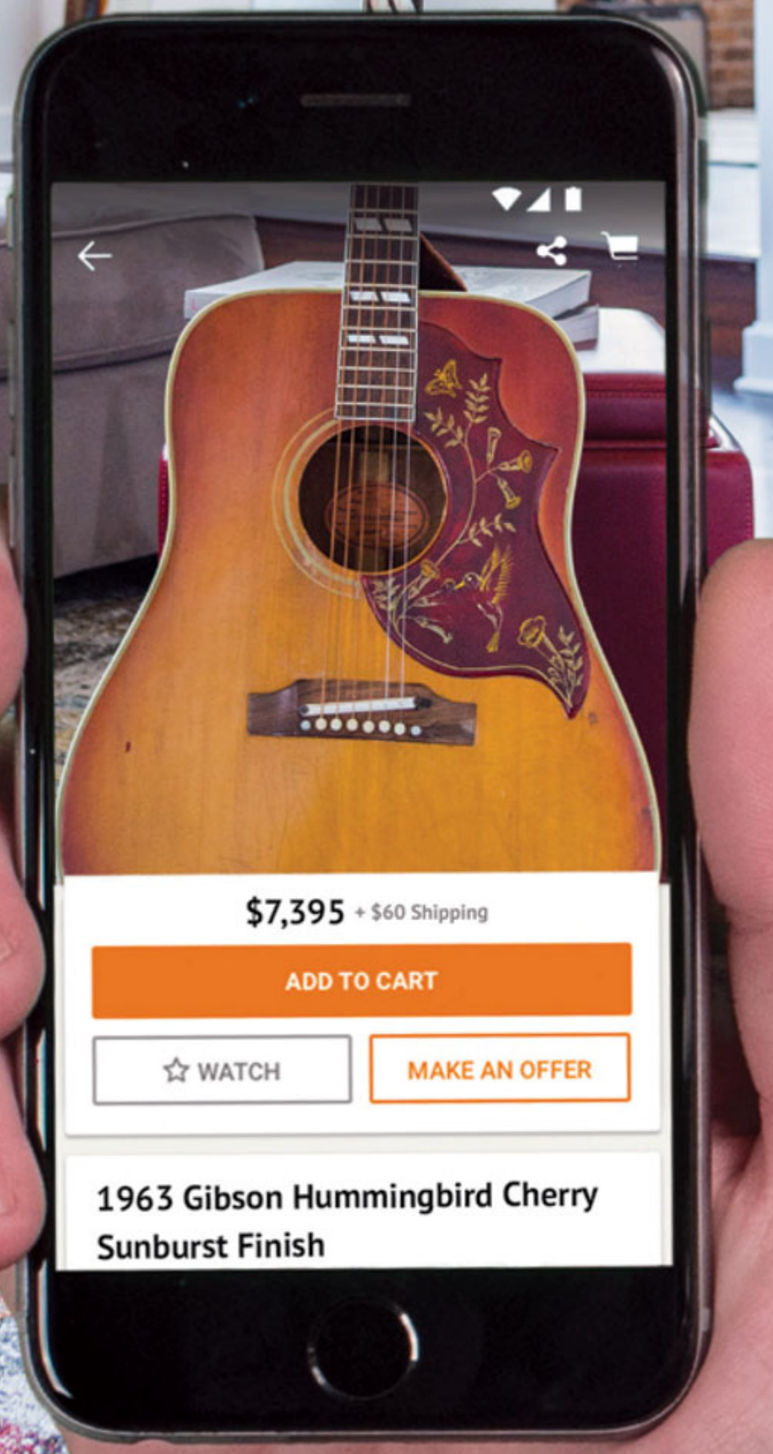

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COVER PHOTO BY **MASSIMO GAMMACURTA**

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Letter *from the* Editor

ONE RECURRING TOPIC of conversation I've had over the past few years with musical instrument dealers and people who work in the guitar manufacturing industry is the guitar's future. Most of these parties have expressed concerns that the new generation of potential guitar enthusiasts is smaller than it's ever been since the Fifties. Will there be enough new guitarists to support the guitar industry's growth or at least allow it to maintain its current level of popularity? Or will the industry suffer a significant decline that only a handful of the healthiest businesses will survive?

From the perspective of the U.S. alone, the future looks uncertain, but when one considers the rest of the world, particularly Asian countries, the outlook is not so bleak. I frequently travel to Japan, and after every visit there I am amazed how so many retail stores and manufacturers seem to be thriving and the guitar industry there seems to be growing. This was particularly evident during my most recent trip to Tokyo, where I was invited to tour the ESP Custom Shop.

In addition to viewing factories bustling with the lively activity of dozens of craftsmen building guitars, I got a glimpse of the next generations of guitar-builders-in-training at ESP's Tokyo Guitar Craft Academy. The advanced class impressed me with their imagination and creativity, but I was also inspired by the skills already evident in the beginning classes, which included many female students. I wouldn't be surprised if the next great guitar model or successful new guitar company got its start in this program.

ESP owner Hisatake Shibuya has made similar investments in the guitar's future in the US through Musicians Institute (MI), which he also owns. In addition to providing traditional music instruction, MI recently opened its own Guitar Craft Academies in Hollywood and Nashville.

I'm also encouraged by the efforts of individuals like S.F. Giants pitcher Jake Peavy, who has made a significant investment in the music scene in his hometown of Mobile, Alabama. Efforts like Peavy's help local musicians thrive and also have the potential to reinvigorate tourism and stimulate local economies as they attract visitors to thriving cultural and nightlife hotspots. These are the things that social media, video games, and other modern distractions simply can't compete with and that truly enrichen our lives.

CHRIS GILL
Editor-in-Chief

GUITAR AFICIONADO

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NEWBAY MEDIA, LLC
28 East 28th Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10016
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GUITAR AFICIONADO (ISSN 1949-0690) is published bimonthly by NewBay Media, LLC, 28 East 28th Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10016. Phone: 212.378.0400. Fax: 917.281.4704. Web Site: www.nbmedia.com. Newsstand distribution is handled by Time Warner Retail. Subscriptions: Basic rate (6 issues): US: $29.95US; Canada: $39.95US; Foreign: $44.95US. Canadian price includes postage and GST #R128220688. PMA #40612608. Subscriptions do not include newsstand-only specials. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to *Guitar Aficionado*, P.O. Box 469030, Escondido, CA 92046-9030. Returns: Pitney Bowes, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2, Canada. Entire contents copyright 2012, NewBay Media, LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited. NewBay Media, LLC is not affiliated with the companies or products covered in *Guitar Aficionado*. Reproduction on the Internet of the articles and pictures in this magazine is illegal without the prior written consent of *Guitar Aficionado*. Products named in the pages of *Guitar Aficionado* are trademarks of their respective companies. PRODUCED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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Effects

NEW + COOL GUITAR

VOICE OF AN ANGEL

COLE CLARK ANGEL 3 SERIES AN3EC-BLBL

{ BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK }

COLE CLARK GUITARS CEO Miles Jackson says one of his company's main objectives is "to have a guitar that is different from other people's guitars." With its wide-ranging line of acoustics, the Melbourne, Australia–based manufacturer has certainly achieved this fundamental credo, right down to the unusual tonewoods it employs in its builds. The company, founded in 2001, prides itself on its devotion to sourcing local timbers, and, given Cole Clark's Aussie home base, this means guitars constructed from species like bunya, Tasmanian blackwood, and Queensland maple. But exotic woods (by Western standards, at least) are only the beginning of what makes a Cole Clark guitar unique. The company's approach to everything from neck construction to acoustic pickup design offers a fresh take on the acoustic six-string.

An exquisite example of this nonstandard approach is the guitar shown here, the grand auditorium-sized Angel 3 Series BLBL. In Cole Clark parlance, 3 Series guitars represent the company's top-of-the-line offerings, with high-end appointments, a proprietary three-way pickup, and AAA-grade tonewoods. On this example, those tonewoods are a Tasmanian blackwood top paired with Tasmanian blackwood back and sides (hence, the BLBL designation). Though relatively unfamiliar on these shores, blackwood "appears in Australia from southern Tasmania to halfway up Queensland," Jackson explains. "There's an awful lot of it, and that's a good thing, because it's sustainable."

Tone-wise, he continues, "blackwood is one genetic sequence away from koa. They're very, very close cousins." Much like koa, blackwood is a particularly stiff timber with a crisp sound, and lends itself to plugged-in playing—which, Jackson says, is where the Angel really sings. This is in large part due to Cole Clark's proprietary three-way pickup system, which combines a trio of transducer elements to project a multifaceted, true acoustic sound that's free of piezo "quack" and feedback. The company thinks of its pickup design as functioning similar to a home audio system, where subwoofers, midrange speakers, and treble horns handle distinct frequencies. In the case of the Angel's electronics, individual under-the-bridge piezo sensors for each string capture the guitar's low end; a "Face Sensor" built into the integral braces on the lower bout attends to the midrange frequencies; and a unidirectional condenser microphone mounted into the underside of the preamp is dedicated to the high-end output.

The pickup system is blended via two preamp dials (one that mixes the output from

"THIS GUITAR WILL CERTAINLY TAKE YOU IN ANOTHER DIRECTION."

the piezos and the Face Sensor, and another for microphone level) and offers exceptional nuance and richness of tone. The result, Jackson says, "is a really natural acoustic sound, very much like if you had a microphone sitting in front of a guitar in the studio. So much so, in fact, that when people record with our guitars they'll often just plug straight into the desk."

Another unique facet of the Angel—and, for that matter, all Cole Clark guitars—is the Spanish-heel neck design, a classical-guitar construction method that sees the front, back, and sides of the body glued directly to the neck, which itself runs as a continuous piece from the headstock all the way to the sound hole. "It's a method that has been used for 300-odd years in Spanish-style instruments," Jackson says. "It gives the guitar a totally different character. There's less compression, and it takes on a different bottom end—very clean and almost piano-like."

The neck on the Angel shown here is constructed from Queensland maple, which provides another point of interest. "Queensland maple is not what you think of in the U.S. as maple," Jackson points out. "It's a tree here in Australia that's white, so early settlers called it maple. But it's not related to U.S. maple at all. It's not even a good friend—it's its own species." That Queensland maple neck is topped with an ebony fingerboard (there is also an ebony bridge—the only nonsustainable wood used in the Angel) that boasts generous Australian abalone fret inlays, and additional abalone ornamentation can be found in the soundhole rosette and the trademark "hip" inlays on the body. Other adornments include subtle timber binding on the fretboard and body as well as rosewood piping on the rosette. A neat visual accent is the strip of bright Queensland maple that runs down the center of the darker Tasmanian blackwood headstock. The contrasting colors and shapes (as well as the sizeable, contoured Grover Imperial tuners) lend a pleasing, archtop-esque art deco flair to the Angel.

The result is an instrument that, from construction materials to electronics to aesthetics, is both a stunning and, yes, "different" type of acoustic guitar. "When we get the chance to explain to people about the woods, pickups, and Spanish heel, they get it," Jackson says.

But more importantly, he adds, "The main thing to us is that when guitarists pick up a Cole Clark they ask themselves, 'Is this going to inspire me to do something different in my playing?' Because it's useful to have different guitars to encourage you in different ways. And this guitar will certainly take you in another direction."

STREET PRICE: $3,199
Cole Clark Guitars, coleclarkguitars.com

SPEAKEASY PEASY

THE SIMPLE JOYS OF THE SIDECAR COCKTAIL

{ BY CHRIS GILL }

ALLEGEDLY INVENTED EITHER in London or Paris around the World War I era and popularized in the United States during the Prohibition years, the Sidecar is a classic cocktail with a mysterious history. Some say the drink originated at London's Buck's Club, while others claim the Sidecar was invented at Harry's Bar in Paris, where it was the favorite drink of a certain U.S. Army captain who always arrived at the bar in his friend's motorcycle sidecar—hence the name. A more logical explanation for the name is that *sidecar* was bartender slang for the extra amount of a cocktail remaining in the shaker after the serving glass was filled. The left-over mixture from the generous pour was served alongside the drink in a shot glass and called a "sidecar."

Like the story of its origins and namesake, the recipe for the Sidecar has changed over the years. The original French version calls for a 1:1:1 ratio of Brandy, Curaçao, and lemon juice, but I prefer the English 2:1:1 ratio found in *The Savoy Cocktail Book*, which is more balanced and not as sweet. When choosing ingredients, I defer to the French, using Rémy Martin VSOP Cognac and Cointreau, which makes the simple syrup called for in some modern recipes unnecessary. For an extra touch of class, I use fresh Meyer lemons when they are in season.

Over the years, most bartenders forgot how to make a good Sidecar, even though the classic version is one of the easiest cocktails to make. Like any simple recipe, the secret of success is starting with great ingredients. Squeeze your own fresh lemon juice, use quality spirits like Cointreau and Rémy Martin Cognac, and even novice mixologists can't go wrong.

SIDECAR

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1 OUNCE COINTREAU

1 OUNCE FRESH-SQUEEZED LEMON JUICE

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{ ANNOTATIONS BY SCOTT HICKEY }

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MARSALA MEMORIES

FRESH FISH AND COUSCOUS AT BUCANIERI

{ BY MICHAEL COLAMECO }

A FEW YEARS BACK we filmed episodes for my PBS show on the legendary food and wine culture of Sicily. We hit all nine provinces in eight days, which translated to working 12-plus hours a day, waking up in a strange hotel room every morning, loading our bags and gear into the back of a van, setting the GPS, and reading the call sheet to see what was next. We drove more than 1,500 miles in total, and each day we visited a minimum of four locations, often more like five or six.

While the finished, edited shows were great, the shoot itself was a total grind. But what really made the ordeal worthwhile were the surprises we encountered along the way. One of them was filming at restaurant Bucanieri in Marsala (ristoranteibucanieri.it). It was late afternoon and we'd already shot at a winery, a vineyard, a bakery, and the famous ancient Trapani salt marshes when we pulled in front of the restaurant situated on Via Lungomare Mediterraneo—the street that winds along the coast of Marsala, right next to the marina and the sea.

When we arrived, Chef Antonino Chirco was there to greet us at the front door. Tan, fit, and handsome, donning a tight button-down white shirt over jeans instead of a chef's jacket and a white linen napkin tied over his head bandana-style, he was just back from a predawn fishing trip and eager to show us back into his kitchen.

There on a large stainless-steel worktable was a display of the morning's catch—a dozen or so fish with the hooks still in their mouths and the monofilament line cut a few inches out. We fileted the fish together, and he went on to make a basic fish stock from the remaining fish frames and heads, along with vegetables, tomatoes, and white wine.

Then things got more interesting. Over a large mulberry cutting board he showed me how to make couscous from scratch! When one thinks of couscous, you may, understandably, assume we are in Morocco or Tunisia. However, the Moorish influence on Sicilian food also makes this a staple in the island's rich culinary repertoire, particularly in Marsala, which is Sicily's westernmost town, located less than 150 miles from Tunisia, across the Mediterranean Sea.

Starting with a pile of semolina flour, Chirco gradually drizzled in water and worked the dough with broad, sweeping, circular motions. After 15 to 20 minutes, the dough formed into thousands of small circular globes, which were laid out to dry for a few hours prior to being ready for cooking that night. The couscous was steamed over the fish stock Chirco had just made and served with the freshly caught fish and a ladle of the broth, resulting in one of the most memorable fish dishes I've had in years—Chirco's *couscous di pesce*.

As if that wasn't enough, Chirco also served our table a hulking T-bone steak, grilled in Florentine fashion over wood in the dining room. His daughter helped him in the kitchen while his son looked after the guests in the front of the house.

After an epic dinner washed down with more wine than I can recall, we all headed up to the terrace for cigars and local Grappa to enjoy a perfect view over the marina. I can't wait to get back to Marsala on vacation and eat at Bucanieri again, this time as a tourist on holiday, with no cameras other than my iPhone.

New York City–based chef and media personality Michael Colameco is the author of *Mike Colameco's Food Lover's Guide to NYC* and hosts *Colameco's Food Show* on PBS and the nationally syndicated radio program *Weekend Food*.

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AS A REBIRTH and homage to the original Healdsburg Guitar Festival, the inaugural 2016 Santa Barbara Acoustic Instrument Celebration set a new tone at a new venue and unveiled the beginnings of a fresh direction for luthier festivals. The event brought together 144 luthiers, held 24 master classes, and presented a special VIP event and shows at Santa Barbara's Soho and Lobero theaters.

Presenting a mix of master luthiers and independent luthiers, the show gave attendees a chance to see and hear a wealth of gorgeous handcrafted guitars. Master luthiers Tom Ribbecke, Linda Manzer, Michael Greenfield, Charles Fox, Kathy Wingert, Rick Turner, and Harvey Leach were joined by musicians Michael Chapdelaine, Sean McGowan, Kinloch Nelson, Tony McManus, Antoine Dufour, and Vicki Genfan, among many others, who brought out the best in the instruments. This show also featured the Legacy Trio: three guitars each priced at more than $1.61 million.

Dates for SBAIC 2017 will be announced soon. For more information, and to watch a new documentary tracing the birth of luthiery's modern renaissance, visit SBAIC.com

(this page, clockwise from top right) A guitar from luthier Jason Kostal's Kostal Guitars; National Fingerstyle champion Michael Chapdelaine; Darrell and Scott Jennings of American Music Furniture

(right) A Legacy Trio Archtop made from "The Tree"; (below, from left) Adam Jacobson, Sarah Jacobson, Lynn Sauter, and Ryan Sauter of Acoustic Remedy Cases; (bottom) a guitar of Brazilian rosewood with spruce top (left) and Indian rosewood with cedar top (right) from Greg Brandt Guitars

(HOLY GRAIL GUITAR SHOW) IMAGES COURTESY OF (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): CAROLYN AMANDA (1 & 2) AND LARS MULLEN (3 & 4)

THE HOLY GRAIL GUITAR SHOW

OCTOBER 8 AND 9, BERLIN, GERMANY

THE HOLY GRAIL Guitar Show brought together 135 luthiers from 37 countries for its annual gathering, demonstrating the diversity of modern luthiery. Now in its third year, the curated invitation-only event drew a near-capacity crowd to view guitars of extraordinary quality. A highlight of this year's show was the Local Wood Challenge, which invited exhibitors to contribute instruments sourced exclusively from local materials to encourage sustainability.

"This year has cemented the Holy Grail Guitar Show's international role as the place to be for high-end, luthier-built boutique and custom guitars," show cofounder Michael Spalt says. "And this is just the beginning. We intend to build on this for the next edition of the show, to be held in Spring 2018." For updates, visit HolyGrailGuitarShow.com.

HISTORY FOR SALE

GUITARS FROM ONE LEGENDARY PLAYER AND TWO LEGENDARY MAKERS SEX UP THE AUTUMN AUCTION SEASON.

{ BY ALAN DI PERNA }

WINTER STORM

WHEN GUERNSEY'S PUT one of Johnny Winter's Erlewine Lazer guitars on the block at its guitar auction back in February 2016, auction house chief Arlan Ettinger hinted that the instrument might represent the tip of a much larger iceberg. That prophecy came to pass on September 30 and October 1 in New York City, when Guernsey's *Johnny Winter: The Auction* sale offered a generous selection of the late guitarist's personal instruments, clothing, and other memorabilia. One highlight of the auction was the Polaris White 1964 Gibson Firebird that was one of Winter's main guitars during the Seventies, immortalized on the cover of his 1976 album, *Captured Live!* The historic instrument claimed $200,000 (including commissions).

Also noteworthy was Winter's **sunburst 1963 Firebird**, which sold for $150,000 (including commissions). The guitar, which was his main instrument for slide playing, can be heard on his acclaimed recordings with Muddy Waters: 1977's *Hard Again,* 1978's *Ready,* and 1979's *Muddy "Mississippi" Waters Live.* Other significant guitars in the auction included Winter's 1930s National Style 4 "Chrysanthemum" Tricone steel resonator guitar, seen on the cover of 1977's *Nothin' But the Blues,* which sold for $16,000. Among the hottest items was the black suede cowboy hat Winter is seen wearing on his *Guitar Slinger* album and his posthumously released 2014 album, *Step Back.* One of several Winter hats on offer, it sold for 17,500.

HERITAGE HEROES

THE STAR OF Heritage Auctions' October 22 *Vintage Guitar* sale was **the last solidbody electric guitar** made by solidbody design pioneer Paul Bigsby. The legendary luthier hand-made the instrument in 1956 for country guitarist Luke Charpentier Jr., whose first name appears on the pickguard. Bigsby designed and built what many historians consider the first modern solidbody electric guitar for country picker Merle Travis in 1946, an instrument that likely also inspired the Fender Esquire/Broadcaster design. The headstock of the Luke Charpentier guitar features a red dot resembling a stop sign above the *i* in the name *Bigsby*, which was Bigsby's symbolic indication that it was his last solidbody Spanish instrument. The guitar failed to reach reserve, and it was for sale post-auction for $200,000.

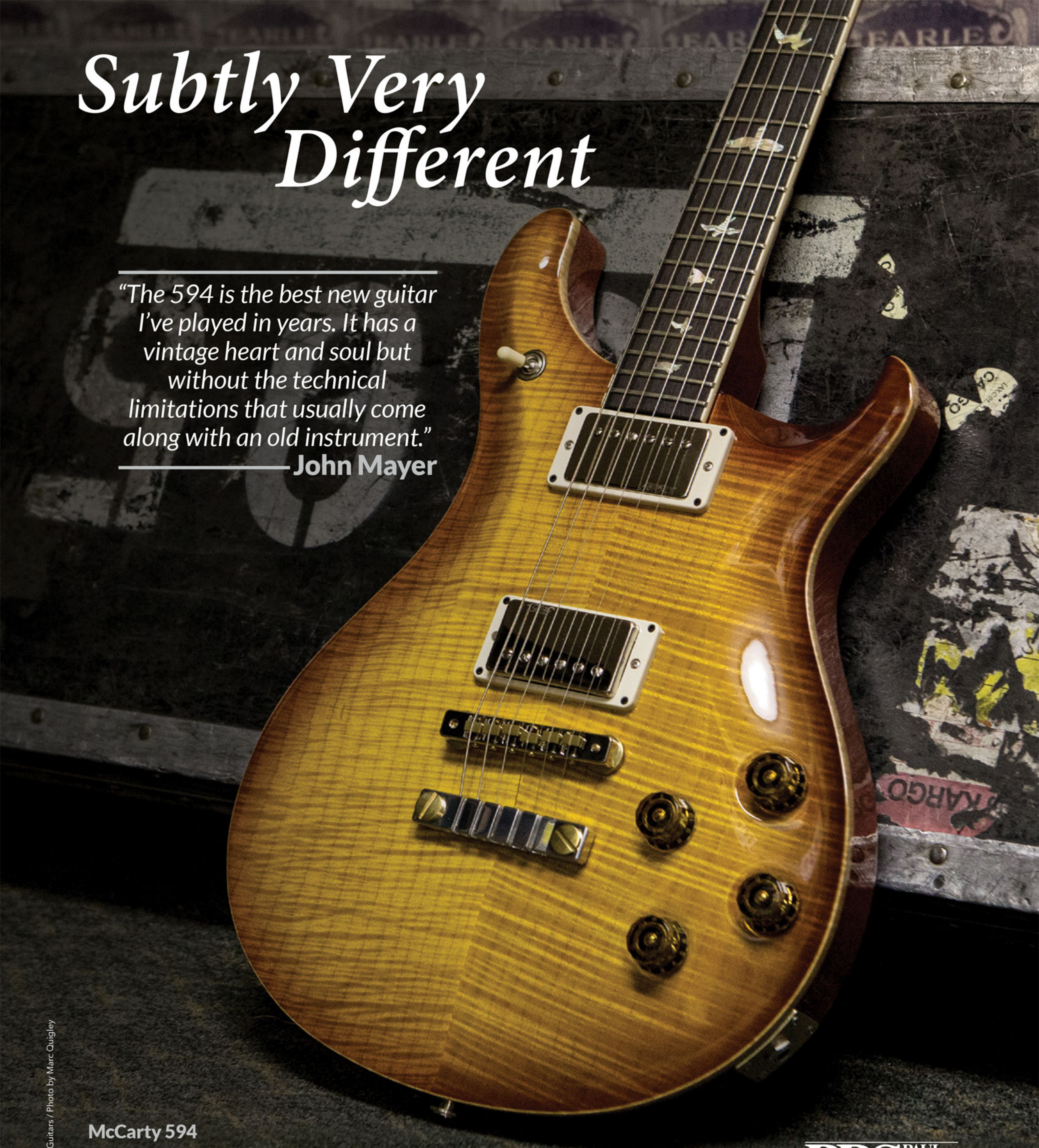
Another instrument steeped in history was featured at the Heritage sale: a one-of-a-kind, Lucite-body 1972 Fender prototype for a model tentatively named the Mod, which was never put into production. The instrument was formerly owned by Beach Boys guitarist Carl Wilson and is heard on that group's 1973 album, *Holland.* The guitar was designed for Fender by legendary luthier Roger Rossmeisl, the man responsible for many of Rickenbacker's most iconic electrics as well as

the Fender Coronado and Telecaster Thinline. Unique features include its black anodized hardware and two oblong holes in the body on either side of the bridge. The latter were implemented by Rossmeisl to cut down on the instrument's weight, which was a liability of Lucite-body guitars. While this model never made it past the prototype stage, the offset body shape foreshadows that of the Fender Starcaster. The Mod's Seth Lover Wide Range humbucking pickups appeared later on the Telecaster Custom and Deluxe. This fascinating "missing link" in the history of Fender, Rossmeisl and the Beach Boys sold for $43,750 (including commissions).

Subtly Very Different

"The 594 is the best new guitar I've played in years. It has a vintage heart and soul but without the technical limitations that usually come along with an old instrument."

John Mayer



McCarty 594

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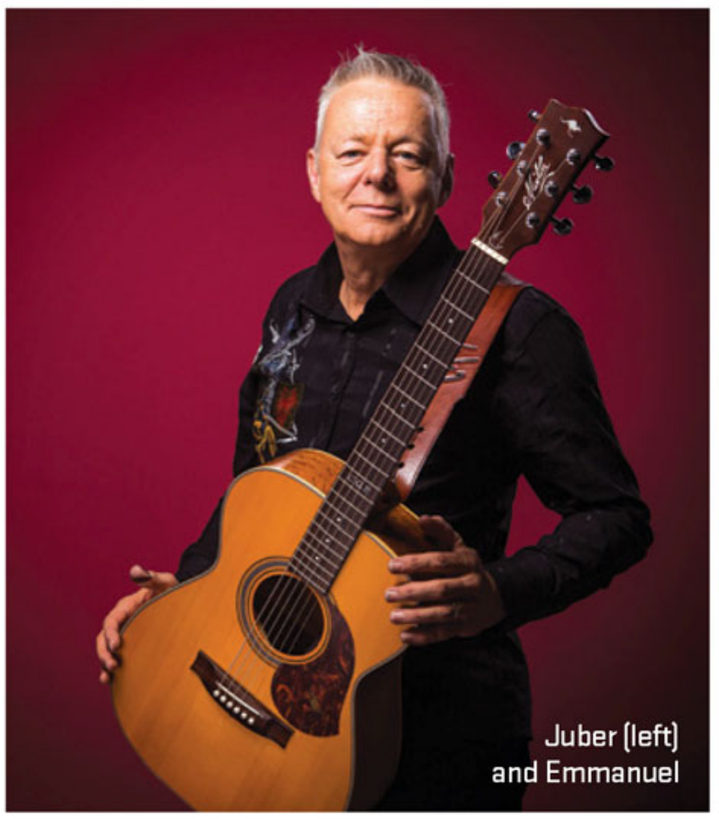


Juber (left) and Emmanuel

WOOD TIDINGS

LAURENCE JUBER AND TOMMY EMMANUEL TAKE ACOUSTIC GUITARS IN HAND ON A PAIR OF NEW CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY ALBUMS.

Holidays & Hollynights
Laurence Juber
HoLoGram Recordings ($18.63)

All I Want for Christmas
Tommy Emmanuel
CGP Sounds ($8.21)

GUITAR-CENTRIC CHRISTMAS albums tend to be electric affairs. The Brian Setzer Orchestra's swinging renditions of holiday favorites come to mind, as does Joe Perry's 2014 release, *Joe Perry's Merry Christmas*. If you're really well versed in this most specific of genres, you may also recall electric entries from artists like Keith Richards ("Run Rudolph Run"), Billy Squier ("Christmas Is the Time to Say I Love You,") AC/DC ("Mistress for Christmas"), Queen ("Thank God It's Christmas"), Bruce Springsteen ("Santa Claus Is Coming to Town), the Waitresses ("Christmas Wrapping"), Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers ("Christmas All Over Again"), and even Spinal Tap ("Christmas with the Devil").

So it's rather refreshing to see a pair of new entries from two of today's most celebrated acoustic guitar fingerstylists: Laurence Juber and Tommy Emmanuel. Both are known for their uniquely inventive interpretations of popular standards, and it's a pleasure to hear them put a fresh acoustic spin on tunes that many of us have heard for several decades running.

For Emmanuel, this isn't exactly new territory. He released his first holiday album, *All I Want for Christmas*, in 2011. On *Christmas Memories*, the Australian fingerstylist showcases new arrangements of favorites like "Jingle Bells," "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!," and "White Christmas." In addition, the album includes three original tunes: "Christmas Time," "Let's Make a Christmas Memory," and "Christmas Memories." Emmanuel is joined on the album by long-time friend and collaborator John Knowles on guitar, Pat Bergeson on guitar and harmonica, and Annie Sellick on vocals. Emmanuel notes that all the tracks were recorded live in the studio—"no studio tricks or fix-ups, just honest singing and playing"—something that can be felt in the spontaneity of the performances.

Juber's *Holidays & Hollynights* is his first Christmas album in nearly 20 years, following on his 1997 release, *Winter Guitar*. The new disc features the guitarist in a trio context with upright bass and drums, giving these takes on holidays favorites—including "Deck the Halls," "Winter Wonderland," and "Blue Christmas"—a smart, laid-back jazz vibe that sets the right mood for quiet evenings by the fire and festive holiday gatherings alike. —*Christopher Scapelliti*

ALBUM

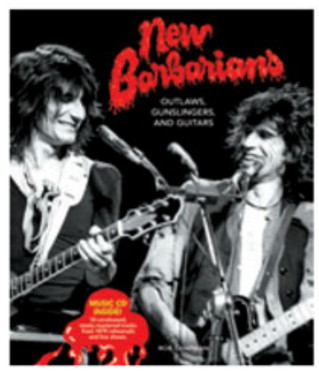
THE COMPLETE STUDIO ALBUMS VOLUME 1 (1976-1991) & VOLUME 2 (1994-2014)

Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers

MCA ($259.98 each)

Forty years ago, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers bowed on the scene with their self-titled debut, containing the hits "American Girl" and "Breakdown." The band has released another 15 albums since then, several of which have been out of print on vinyl for years. These two new limited-edition box sets return Petty and the Heartbreakers' full catalog to the medium, with each album pressed on 180-gram vinyl and packaged with replica artwork. *Volume 1* includes everything from the debut through *Into the Great Wide Open*, while *Volume 2* picks up with *Wildflowers* and includes the group's latest, *Hypnotic Eye*.

BOOK



NEW BARBARIANS: OUTLAWS, GUNSLINGERS AND GUITARS

By Rob Chapman

Voyageur Press (200 pages, $40)

Ron Wood supported his 1979 solo album *Gimme Some Neck* by hitting the road with an all-star band featuring Keith Richards, jazz bassist Stanley Clarke, Faces keyboardist Ian McLagan, Rolling Stones saxophonist Bobby Keys, and Meters drummer Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste. Dubbed the New Barbarians, they performed a mere 20 dates before disappearing into history's back pages. Author Rob Chapman digs into the group's short life and comes up with a trove of intimate stories—including how the group helped Richards get through his heroin addiction following his drug bust in Toronto—and revealing behind-the-scenes photos. The book includes a 10-track CD, featuring selections from the 1979 tour.

PHOTO (JUBER) ADAM GASSON, GETTY IMAGES; (EMMANUEL) MARK SULLIVAN, WIREIMAGE

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CELESTION

EXOTIC

SOUL FUL

PRO VOCATIVE

Exploring the unique artistry and dedication of Tokyo's ESP Custom Shop.

WORDS & PHOTOS
by CHRIS GILL

PAGE 29

THE ESP CUSTOM SHOP in Tokyo really should be called a "dream atelier" or maybe the "guitar concept/reality workshop." Whereas most major manufacturer custom shops today are specialized extensions of their regular factories, where a select group of the company's highest skilled craftsmen produce high-end variations of standard models with premium-quality woods, non-standard finishes, and a wider variety of hardware options, the ESP Custom Shop may be the only major manufacturer that will build absolutely anything a customer can imagine. It's rare these days to find even small boutique luthier workshops willing to take upon such ambitious and challenging projects.

"If you have an idea in your head and you want to make a guitar, whether it's a detailed graphic finish, a unique body shape, a new headstock design or anything, our custom shop will build it," says ESP USA president and CEO Matt Masciandaro. "Our doors are open to anyone. If anyone has a question about what type of custom guitar we can build, they just need to contact us directly. We're happy to talk to customers about anything, and we do it all the time."

The creations that have come out of the ESP Custom Shop range from impressively hot-rodded versions of their popular models to intricately carved works of art in the shapes of angels, demons, and various otherworldly characters. Some of the guitars have stunning, sophisticated inlay work and gold-leaf finishes that resemble museum-worthy Rinpa school masterpieces, and a few particularly stunning examples were crafted almost entirely out of metal to resemble a samurai's suit of armor. More modern influences appear in the form of carbon-fiber bodies, flamboyantly shaped metal hardware parts, and intricate wooden marquetry in dazzling geometric patterns.

In addition to building dozens of custom order guitars every year, the ESP Custom Shop allows its craftsmen to develop their own creations. These guitars are called the Exhibition Series, and they're built primarily for display at trade shows like the Winter NAMM convention in Anaheim and the Tokyo Guitar Show. Every year, ESP has built an increasing number of Exhibition Series instruments. For the 2016 NAMM convention, the ESP Custom Shop built more than 80 instruments, most of which occupied an entire wall of ESP's exhibit.

"For the last four NAMM shows we've allowed our builders to come up with their own ideas for the Exhibition

Finished custom guitars and wood options on display at ESP's Ochanomizu Big Boss store.

Series guitars," Masciandaro says. "Many of those guitars are designed to show their artistry, skill, and technique, but sometimes they have an entirely new concept that they want to present. Previously our custom shop only built what customers asked for, and we still do that. But now our builders also have unlimited freedom to express themselves. Most of the Exhibition Series guitars we display are sold to dealers, and customers can buy them. Prices start at $5,000, but more the more exotic guitars can go for $10,000 to $20,000 or more."

The ESP Custom Shop craftsmen share the same facilities in Tokyo where every ESP-brand guitar is built. In fact, the shop's craftsmen also build many of ESP's Artist Signature models as well as a few of ESP's regular production instruments. "If somebody sees James Hetfield playing an ESP guitar, they can contact us and get the same guitar made by the same exact pair of hands," Masciandaro explains. "Most other custom shops don't make the guitars that their artists play available to the average consumer. Often those custom shops' top level people won't be accessible at all to the average consumer, but we don't discriminate like that."

Part of the reason why the ESP Custom Shop is inconspicuously integrated with ESP's regular production is because the company essentially started as a custom shop from the beginning. ESP's history begins in 1975 when Hisatake Shibuya opened the Electric Sound Products shop in Tokyo. Shibuya—who still owns ESP today and has built an impressive musical instrument empire that also includes Schecter, the Musicians Institute, 14 retail stores in Japan, and various ESP Guitar Craft Academies as well as the United Television Broadcasting station—started his business by offering custom-made, high-quality guitar replacement parts that guitarists used to modify and improve their instruments. These parts included bodies, necks, hardware, and electronics—just about everything needed to build a guitar.

Thanks to demand from guitarists who weren't satisfied with the quality of mass-produced guitars that were on the market at that time, ESP started a small production line in the shop and began to build guitars to a higher standard than what was commonly available. Initially, Shibuya's company introduced the Navigator brand, which produced very high-quality reproductions of classic vintage American models. Soon ESP noticed that many guitarists actually wanted instruments that were different than what was already available, so by 1979 they also started to offer custom instruments built entirely to guitarists' specifications using ESP parts. This was the beginning of what eventually became the ESP brand.

"For its first 10 years as a company, ESP only sold guitars domestically in Japan," Masciandaro says. "In the mid Eighties, ESP started an overseas division and rented out a loft space in Manhattan on 19th Street. They started there with only three or four employees. ESP imported the replacement parts that they made as well as a line of Strat- and Tele-style guitars, which were known as the 400 Series. In 1989, two years after I started working for the company, the overseas division moved to 48th Street in the heart of Manhattan's guitar and recording studio district. That's when ESP really started to develop its own identity."

Back in the late Eighties, 48th Street in Manhattan was arguably the world's epicenter for professional guitarists. The block of the street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues was home to big retail stores like Manny's and Sam Ash as well as a variety of independent used and vintage guitar shops. Manhattan's biggest recording studios as well as the Studio Instrument Rentals rehearsal stages were within a few blocks, so studio guitarists, aspiring bands

(above) An advanced student works on his acoustic design at ESP's Tokyo Guitar Craft Academy; (below) Various figured tonewoods selected by customers await their transformation into custom guitars.

(top) A CNC machine carves body contours; (bottom) Custom instruments on display at the ESP Museum in Shibuya.

and established artists became regular customers of the businesses on Music Row.

"It was the heyday of the New York studio scene," Masciandaro recalls. "We were the only guitar company that a lot of New York guitarists had direct face-to-face access to. Artists, bands, and session players who lived or worked in New York came to ESP because we could put together whatever guitar they wanted. They could select the exact neck and body or build a custom Strat with any option that they wanted, such as an ebony fretboard, 24-fret neck, and a pair of humbuckers. We were very open minded, and we would build anything."

Rolling Stones guitarist Ron Wood was one of the first big name artists to order a guitar from ESP's 48th Street store, and he still uses his first black Tele-style ESP guitar (as well as a number of similar backups that ESP has built over the years) with the band today. Soon the biggest metal bands of the time followed suit, including guitarists from Anthrax, Megadeth, and Slayer. James Hetfield and Kirk Hammett from Metallica started endorsing ESP guitars in 1988, and they remain some of the company's biggest endorsers.

"As we met with professional players day in and day out," Masciandaro says, "we started to develop our own identity. The custom shop grew considerably at that time too, because we realized that if we wanted to progress to the next level we needed to be able to build players whatever they wanted. We didn't want to limit ourselves to building only certain lines of guitars and telling people that this is only what we sell. We realized that would make ESP different than most of the big companies. You could get a guitar that wasn't your dad's guitar. A lot of younger players wanted something different than the classic Strats and Les Pauls that their parents played. They wanted something cooler, perhaps with a Floyd Rose, a graphic finish, or custom inlays. If you wanted those things, ESP was the place to go."

ESP's business in Japan developed in a similar fashion during this period. One of ESP's earliest endorsers in Japan was Toshihiko Takamizawa of the band the Alfee. ESP built an intricately carved guitar guitar featuring a winged angel as its body for Takamizawa, which became his signature stage guitar. Over the years, ESP has built a wide variety of increasingly sophisticated angel guitars for Takamizawa as well as for showpiece purposes. Several of these guitars are on display at the ESP Museum located in the ESP Craft-house shop in Shibuya, Tokyo, along with instruments owned and played by various other ESP artists, other custom shop creations, and an impressive variety of vintage guitars from Hisatake Shibuya's personal collection.

ESP's dedication to serving guitarists is evident in the stores the company owns in Japan. There are eight ESP stores in Tokyo alone, including the three stores (Big Boss, ESP Guitar Workshop, and VIP Guitars) located

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(top) Guitars built at the ESP factory are still crafted mostly by hand; (bottom) The ESP Custom Shop master craftsmen (left to right) Daisuke Kusama, Youichi Harada, Yoshiyuki Tamogami, Shinichiro Kobayashi, Ryouta Kanou, and Hayato Yamaguchi.

within blocks of each other in Tokyo's Ochanomizu guitar district. Upstairs from the Ochanomizu Big Boss store is the Tokyo location of the ESP Guitar Craft Academy, which is instructing new generations of guitar builders. Skills and creativity are emphasized from the very beginning. Introductory students have to conceive their own designs and build their instruments entirely by hand, performing every stage of the construction, from building the neck and carving the body to installing hardware and electronics. Graduates of the ESP Guitar Craft Academy, which also includes locations in Osaka, Nagoya, and Sendai, have gone on to work for every major guitar manufacturer in Japan in addition to becoming new hires for ESP, and many have started their own boutique companies.

For customers in Japan, the ESP stores are also an ideal place to order a custom instrument. Most of the stores have a selection of woods on hand that customers can examine and even select for the instrument they want built, and finished examples are available so customers can inspect the craftsmanship and attention to detail. The stores also offer a variety of finished one-of-a-kind and limited-edition custom instruments for customers who may not want to wait to have an instrument built.

Customers in the United States who would like to order a guitar from the ESP Custom Shop are advised to download an order form from the ESP website (espguitars.com), fill it out and bring it to an authorized ESP dealer, who will get a price quote from ESP. "Customers can order an ESP custom guitar from any authorized ESP dealer," Masciandaro says. "It's not limited to a select group of premier dealers or anything like that. The order form has pull-down menu of options that you can choose, but that is just a basic guideline. You can also write in anything that you may want for any of the features. Unlike most other custom shops, we don't limit your options to whatever is on the order form. Our order form is just a guide. We've had a few orders where customers don't even use the order form because what they want is so unusual, and they'll just send in a list of specs, a file with the body shape and inlay design, and so forth. As long as the order is coherent, you can take it to any dealer and we'll build it."

Although Masciandaro comments that the ESP Custom Shop only accounts for a small percentage of the company's business, it's easy to see that it remains the heart of the company's day-to-day operations and a driving force that inspires the company's future. "Our standard production line became our biggest source of income as ESP grew," he says, "but we never lost the custom shop because it has always been the creative core of our business. The custom shop will always be a large part of our identity. Even though we've become a bigger company over the years, we've never lost the personality of the small company we were in our early days." GA

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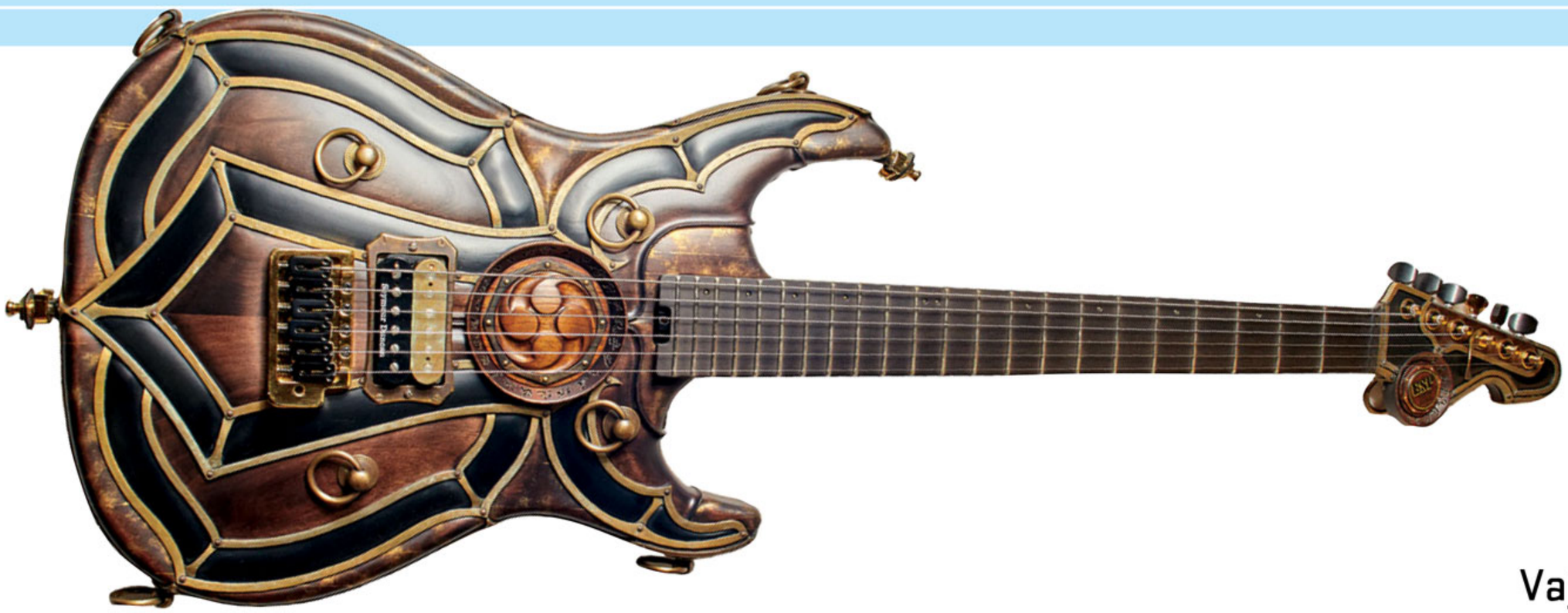

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by Dan Epstein

by John Fulton

"Music, to me, is the polar opposite of

playing baseball," San Francisco Giants pitcher Jake Peavy says. "It's not competitive; it's something to be shared. Playing music is just as intense as baseball for me, and I take it just as seriously, but it's also been a noncompetitive release for me at the end of a lot of days."

A three-time All Star, two-time World Series champion (earning rings with the 2013 Boston Red Sox and the 2014 Giants) and winner of the 2007 National League Cy Young Award, Peavy has more than made his mark in the big leagues. Now, the 35-year-old right-hander is trying to make a musical mark on his hometown of Mobile, Alabama.

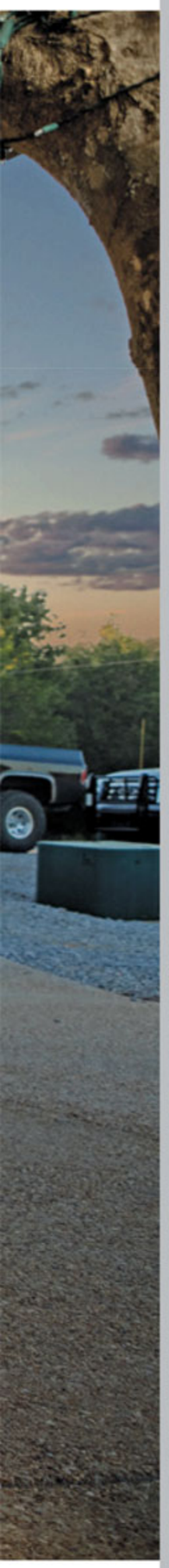
A passionate music fan, avid guitar collector, and occasional performer with his band, the Outsiders, Peavy recently opened Dauphin Street Sound, Mobile's first world-class recording facility. Designed by Gavin

Haverstick of Haverstick Designs and Dauphin Street Sound chief engineer Keylan Laxton, the facility's two studios feature Acoustical Fulfillment's Flex-48 Adaptive Treatment System, which provides customizable variable acoustics in its live rooms and isolation booths. Outfitted with recording desks, monitors, and microphones hand-picked by Trina Shoemaker, the three-time Grammy-winner (Sheryl Crow, Stephen Curtis Chapman) who has joined the Dauphin Street Sound team as producer and engineer, the rustic-feeling complex also houses an impressive array of vintage guitars. Among the instruments are several rare axes from Peavy's personal collection, including a 1955 Fender Telecaster (possibly the first Tele with a sunburst finish), a 1954 Fender Stratocaster previously owned by Eric Johnson, a 1956 Strat with original blonde finish and ash body, and a 1969 Gibson Les Paul Deluxe gold-top.

"This is not a guitar collection that sits hoarded at my house that I just share with my buddies when they come over," Peavy explains. "These are workingman's instruments, and they're meant to be played and shared. If you record here in the studio, you can play 'em." (Many of the guitars are also available for purchase via the Dauphin Street Sound website.)

> *"You watch all the musicians interacting and having fun, and the night gets greased up, man!"*

If this all sounds like a recording musician's dream, well, that's been the intention since the spring of 2015, when Peavy bought and began renovating the storefront property at 651 Dauphin Street, in the heart of Mobile's downtown entertainment district. Having recently moved back to Alabama (his home is the Southern Falls Plantation, a few hours drive from Mobile in Hartford, Alabama), Peavy needed a local office for the Jake Peavy Foundation, the charitable foundation he established in 2012 that primarily works with (and raises money for) disadvantaged youth and military veterans. The sprawling single-story building on Dauphin Street turned out to be the perfect fit. And, as it happened, the structure had formerly housed a small recording studio. "Of course, my team's gonna find some



Friends and family: (left to right) Keylan Laxton (chief engineer at Dauphin Street Sound), Jason Foti, Luke Peavy (DSS general manager), Peavy, Sonny "Papa" Lolli, Jimmie "Mack" McClain, Ben Jernigan (studio manager at DSS), and Thomas Fowlkes (media relations at DSS)

offices with half of a makeshift studio in there already!" Peavy says, with a laugh. "I was like, 'We could put a little money into it, and have a great one.'"

"There's an incredible amount of talent down here," says Dauphin Street Sound studio manager Ben Jernigan, a veteran of the Mobile music scene who plays lead guitar in Peavy's band. "It's a really thriving creative environment, but every time something really cool starts happening, it runs off to Nashville or Atlanta or New Orleans. We realized that if you're going to keep musicians in Mobile rather than just have them passing through, you've gotta have a place for them to capture the music they're making."

"It's a 300-year-old city," Peavy adds, "so it has some history, soul, and spirit. But musically, we really haven't had anything other than [*Seventies southern rock band*] Wet Willie coming out of here that's a bona fide rock star. You have to have a place for music to be born out of, and I want this studio to be a home for artists of any genre. Come in and be yourself, and you're going to be surrounded by people who want to let your artistic juices flow and make real music that you're proud of."

Peavy in his Southern Falls Plantation guitar room with a Tele featuring a Waylon Jennings–style tooled leather cover emblazoned with his uniform number.

In addition to being a focal point for the local music scene, Dauphin Street Sound is envisioned as becoming a destination for recording artists from all over the globe—just as Alabama's legendary Muscle Shoals Sound Studio was in the Sixties and Seventies—as well as a haven for Mobile's session players.

"You've got all these heavy-hitting sidemen and studio guys that can't make a living in Mobile, so they go where they can make a living," Jernigan explains. "It's terrible to see somebody like that leave, and we're looking to keep that from happening—and maybe also recruit some new people who are tired of the big-city, corporate-studio thing.

"Back in the day, Muscle Shoals was a destination, because of the studio," he continues, "but there's nothing to do in Muscle Shoals! That's the difference here. You can come to Mobile and not have the big-city distractions, like Nashville, but it's also not just a total one-horse town, like Muscle Shoals. It's hard to explain it until you come here and see it for yourself, but Mobile is more than just a small stopping point off the interstate. It has the kind of energy and vibe that you feel in other cultural epicenters like New Orleans. Slowly but surely, we're trying to get all the pieces

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in place so you can make a living as a musician here."

Jake Peavy traces his love of music back to the Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson records his father used to play when he was a kid. But he didn't actually pick up a guitar until 2002, when he was a rookie with the San Diego Padres. Impressed by the acoustic picking of Tim Flannery, the Padres' third base coach, Peavy asked "Flan" to teach him how to play "Pancho and Lefty," the Townes Van Zant classic popularized by Waylon and Willie.

"He said, 'Sure, I can show you that, but why don't you just learn to play guitar?'" Peavy recalls. "I said, 'I don't want to learn to play guitar, I just want to learn 'Pancho and Lefty'!"

But learn to play, he did. Flannery showed Peavy how to play the song in DADGAD tuning, and once Peavy got the hang of it, Flannery gave him a Baby Taylor to practice on. The guitar bug bit Peavy hard, and soon he and Flannery were regularly jamming together on team road trips. After ballgames, the pair could usually be found in the stairwells of the hotels that the Padres were staying in, strumming away.

"None of this would be possible if it weren't for the gift of being able to play baseball."

While baseball continued to be Peavy's number-one priority, music became his main interest off the field, along with philanthropy. "In San Diego, I developed a real appreciation for the military through all the things that the Padres did with the veterans' hospitals there," he explains. "I started the Jake Peavy Foundation because I wanted to do something positive with the platform I have, something that would have a positive impact on the community. I really wanted to help veterans with PTSD and anyone who put in their service time and has come back struggling. I wanted to help them get reacquainted with society."

Like many ballplayers with charitable foundations, Peavy initially raised funds by organizing and hosting golf tournaments. (The fifth annual Jake Peavy Foundation Charity Golf Classic was held this November at Mobile's Magnolia Grove Golf Course.) But it gradually dawned on Peavy that he could also combine music and philanthropy. "I didn't understand why I was only doing a golf tournament when I love music so much," he says. "I thought, Why couldn't I do a fundraiser wrapped around *music*?"

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Peavy's burgeoning friendship with Jernigan helped point the way forward. "I was working as a firefighter," Jernigan explains, "and I was playing guitar on my days off. I started off putting together these 'super jam' type of one-off events, where I would invite all of my friends from New Orleans or Atlanta. That led to me doing fundraisers for a variety of non-profits. Then I crossed paths with Jake through a mutual friend, and he helped me do a really cool New Orleans–themed fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Foundation a few years ago. It was a big success, and it got to where we were hanging out more and more."

With the help of Jernigan and Peavy's younger brother Luke—who also serves as the general manager of Dauphin Street Sound—the Jake Peavy Foundation has organized or participated in several fundraising concerts over the past few years, including the Hero Jam concerts held during spring training in Scottsdale, Arizona. (The annual concerts, which benefit the USO, feature performances by the Outsiders and various musical guests.) In August 2016, the foundation partnered with the Grateful Dead's Rex Foundation for Can't Stop the Train: A Tribute to Jerry Garcia. Held at the Fillmore in San Francisco, the show featured a performance by Peavy and the Outsiders, who were joined onstage by a stellar cast of musicians, including Phil Lesh, Col. Bruce Hampton, Jeff Sipe, Jackie Greene, Cody and Luther Dickinson from the North Mississippi All Stars, and Peavy's old buddy Tim Flannery.

"I love to get in the mix and front these things with our band," Peavy says, "but then I know when to get out of the way and let guys like Jackie Greene and Luther Dickinson trade licks. You watch all the musicians interacting and having fun, and the night gets greased up, man! It made for some really cool musical moments.

"It was such an amazing night," he continues. "We sent every bit of money from it to Larkin Street Youth Services, who are getting homeless kids off the streets of San Francisco. We also put in some money to put together music programs at Larkin and give the kids some education—we bought guitars for these kids, and we give them instruction and try to help them find the same release and escape in music that I've found, when life gets overwhelming. I want to give kids hope for the future."

"Everything Jake does with his foundation, and everything Jake does in Mobile, there was no manual for this, no rulebook," Jernigan adds. "We just got together for one common goal of success, and we're making it work."

Indeed, Peavy's foundation has been similarly active in bringing music to kids in Mobile, and the pitcher says he hopes to be even more of a presence in the Port City—in works both musical and charitable—when it comes time to retire.

"None of this would be possible if it weren't for the gift of being able to play baseball, and I certainly understand that," he says. "I'm not sure how many more years I'll play for—maybe I'll have another two or three years. Music is something that I fell in love with along my journey, and it's been my release and escape. My experiences in those towns I've played in have certainly shaped my taste in music. But for now, my first commitment is to baseball. At the end of the day, I just want to be known as a baseball player who loves music and who wants to play a part in his community." GA

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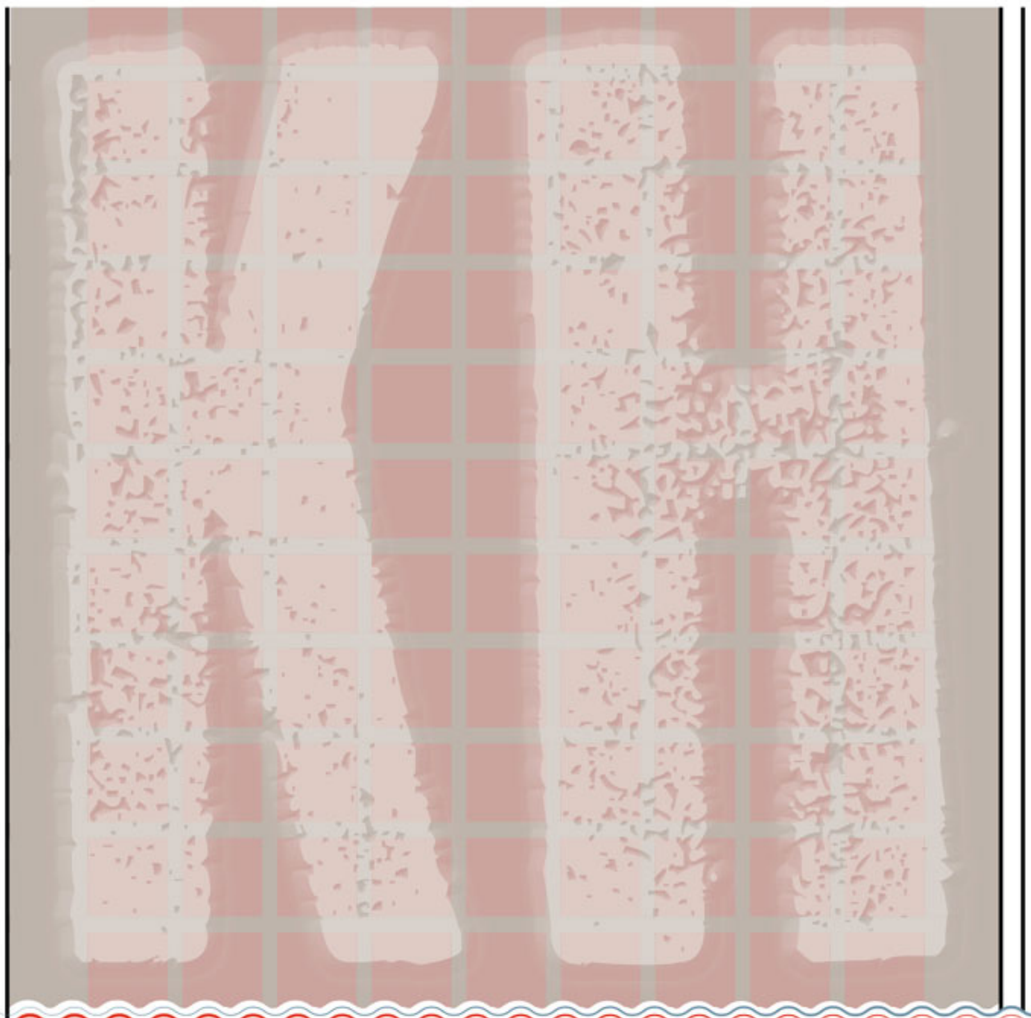

COLLECTION BLUES

KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS lead guitarist **GREG MARTIN** may not own as many vintage guitars as he used to, but these days he's focused more on quality than quantity.

WORDS BY ALAN DI PERNA • PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEITH LEMAN

IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR A GUITARIST

to consolidate his assets and downsize wisely after a lifetime of guitar and amp collecting. That was the case for Kentucky Headhunters lead guitarist Greg Martin. Since starting his career in the Sixties, Martin had amassed a collection that was the envy of many vintage guitar connoisseurs, but lately he's been paring down his collection while focusing on a handful of absolute gems.

"Over the years, I've had to strip back a little," he says. "My brother always taught me to trade up. When you trade a guitar, add some money to it and get yourself a better guitar. Over the years I've tried to do that. I don't have as many guitars as I used to, but I've got some really good ones."

While Martin once brought a slew of vintage guitars and amps into the studio for Headhunters album projects, he kept things simple for the group's new release, *On Safari*. Normally more of a Marshall man, Martin relied instead on a Fifties-era tweed Fender Twin and 1950 tweed Champ this time out. "I've done a few sessions with the tweed amps, and I said, 'Man these guys sound pretty good for that,' " he explains.

His principal guitar for the sessions was the 1958 Les Paul Standard that is the prize of his collection, supplemented by a 1964 Gibson Melody Maker for slide parts. With these

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KY HEADHUNTERS

★

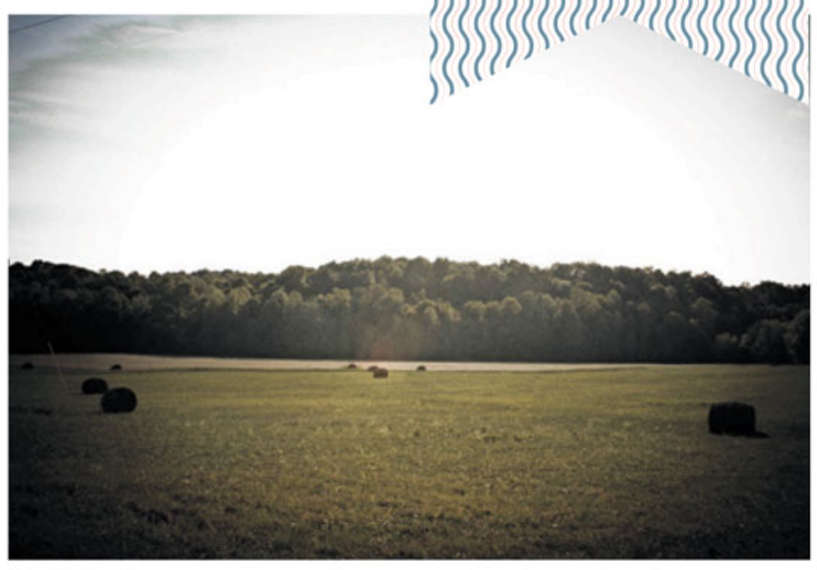
(clockwise from left) Richard Young (left) with 1952 Tele and Greg Martin (right) with Thirties National jamming on the porch of their ol' Kentucky home, a.k.a. the Practice House; Martin's collection includes (left to right) a 1957 Strat, 1958 Les Paul Standard, 1963 Les Paul SG, 1957 Tele, 1963 ES-335, and a Thirties steel-body National; view from the Practice House porch; Tele and tweed; Martin with National and signature Rocky Mountain slide

select few instruments and amps, he was able to endow *On Safari* with a glorious range of classic guitar sounds—from creamy slide timbres to crisp brown-tone leads that blend crunch with clarity in all the right proportions.

"The whole album was recorded live in the studio with very few overdubs," he says of *On Safari*. "The only solo that wasn't done live was 'Jukebox Full of Blues,' the little shuffle at the end. That was originally recorded with just a straight guitar solo. But after we cut it, I said, 'I'd like to try that with slide.' The song is in C, though, and that's a really crazy key to play slide in. I could have played it in standard 440 tuning, but I like to have the open strings you get with an open tuning. In the end, I put it in either open A or G tuning with a capo and did the solo that way. Open G is my favorite tuning for slide. When you play in open G or A, you're getting into the more country-blues realm, whereas when you do open D or open E, you get into Duane Allman territory."

Slide playing is one of Martin's many strong suits. Like any good aspiring bluesman, he started off with Coricidin glass bottle slides. Later, he gravitated to a Swamp Frog from Rocky Mountain Slides and now has his own signature-model Rocky Mountain slide. "What I do on slide ends up sounding like a lap steel a lot of times," he says, "because I grew up listening to a lot of country music. An element of that slips in there."

Rock music was at top of the playlist back in 1968 in Glasgow, Kentucky, when Martin and the Young Brothers



> "Vintage guitars have a history. I love the fact that someone else's DNA is on them."

joined forces in a band called Itchy Brother. At first, they did what every psychedelicized garage band did in 1968. "We started playing covers—Steppenwolf, Cream, Iron Butterfly, Beatles, Stones, " Martin says. "But you could not help be influenced by the country roots of the area—people like Merle Travis, Merle Haggard, Chet Atkins, George Jones."

The Headhunters' seamless blend of country and rock is part of a broader American roots-music palette that also embraces blues, R&B, southern boogie, and even a bit of gospel. What other group could cover Alice Cooper ("Caught in a Dream") and Charlie Daniels ("Way Down Yonder") on the same album and do equal justice to both? Great guitar playing is the common denominator that links these styles, and the Headhunters stand proud in the grand tradition of two-guitar bands. Powered by his 1952 and 1960 Telecasters and a Les Paul Junior, Richard Young's sparkling rhythm work provides the perfect complement to Martin's Gibson-centric tone.

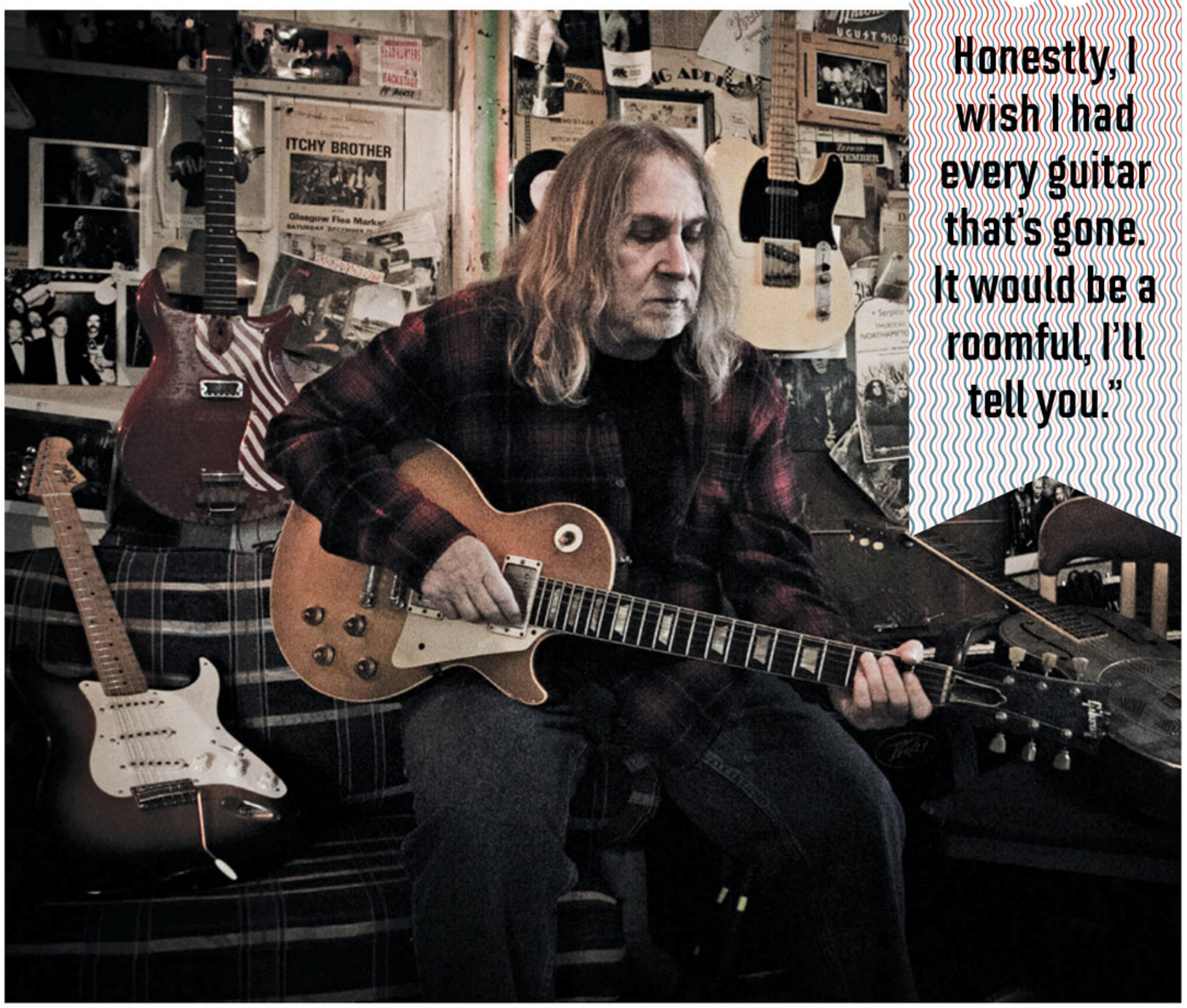
"Richard and I are like a hillbilly version of Keith Richards and Mick Taylor," Martin quips. "Not to compare us to that by any means, but I think that any band with two guitar players should go back to [*the Rolling Stones' 1970 live album*] *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out*—that era right there. That shows what two guitars can do together. As much as I love power trios, it's also great to have a wonderful rhythm player. And Richard is that."

The Kentucky Headhunters' rootsy, guitar-friendly sound on their debut album, *Pickin' on Nashville*, landed them at the top of the country charts in 1989. Around this time, Martin's sunburst 1958 Les Paul Standard came into his life. It was a gift from Hank Williams Jr., who toured with the Headhunters in 1990. Williams initially lent it to Martin to shoot the video for "Oh Lonesome Me," the Don Gibson cover that was the third single from *Pickin' on Nashville*, and the Kentucky Headhunters' sole Top 10 hit.

"Hank was kind enough to let me use that guitar," Martin says. "I plugged it in and said, 'That's it. That's the sound I've been looking for all my life.' I've tried every guitar, but nothing had the tone of that '58 through an old Marshall. When I took it back on the bus in 1991 to give it back to him, I said, 'I love this guitar, but something like this is always just out of reach for me [*financially*].' He said, 'Well, if that's the case, you can keep it.' "

The Les Paul had formerly belonged to Lynyrd Skynyrd guitarist Ed King. "But the story I also heard is that a gospel group owned it," Martin adds. "There's a crown on the case that looks like a gospel type of crown. Vintage guitars have a history. I love the fact that someone else's DNA is on them."

These days, Martin's 1958 Les Paul mainly accompanies him on sessions and photo or video shoots. "The crew gets a little freaked-out when I take it out," he deadpans. "But I play some little side gigs every now and then with it. I've got a friend who goes with me and watches the guitar when I go on breaks. I'm very careful with that guitar."



"Honestly, I wish I had every guitar that's gone. It would be a roomful, I'll tell you."

For road work these days, Martin's main ax is a Gibson Collector's Choice (CC) copy of his 1958 Les Paul Standard—CC #15—along with CC #13, which is based on Lovin' Spoonful frontman John Sebastian's historic 1959 'burst, and a Gibson Custom Shop R8 1958 Les Paul Special. "Those three guitars get me through," he says. "The Gibson Custom Shop is building some great stuff."

As an avid devotee of the Lovin' Spoonful, Martin is especially fond of Gibson's Sebastian model. "My brother and cousin took me to see the Lovin' Spoonful in the fall of 1966," he says. "It was the first time I saw John Sebastian, and I was infatuated with the little guitar he was playing. I didn't know what it was, but that was his '59 Les Paul. That always stuck with me. I was a big fan of the Lovin' Spoonful anyway; John Sebastian is one of my big heroes. I love the Beatles and the Stones, but when I saw the Lovin' Spoonful I realized that you could take rock and roll and mix it with country, blues, and jugband music and come out with some really cool music. I think that influence comes out many times on the new album. Richard and I have a lot of John and Zal [*Yanovsky, the Spoonful's lead guitarist, who died in 2002*] in us. And now John's my friend; Zal was too."

Martin is a true Gibson aficionado, and his collection also includes a 1963 ES-335, a 1963 Les Paul SG, a 1959 double-cutaway Les Paul Junior, and the 1964 Melody Maker he uses for slide that's not quite stock. His later-model Gibsons include a 1974 Flying V and a 1979 ES-175.

Martin's Fender collection is spare but well curated and includes a 1957 Strat, a 1957 Telecaster, and a 1959 Tele, along with a more recent Fender Nashville B-Bender Tele. For acoustics, he relies on his 1972 Martin D-28, a 1973 D-35, and a Thirties-era steel-body Dobro. "I'm mainly a Gibson/Fender guy, but I've owned everything over the years," he says.

Nor has Martin given up acquiring new instruments. He's currently on the hunt for just the right Olympic White rosewood-neck vintage Strat to replace one from 1964 that he sold some time ago. Inevitably, he misses some of the guitars he no longer owns, such as his 1950 Esquire, 1958 Les Paul Special, 1959 dot-neck Gibson 335 with PAF pickups, and the mid-Fifties Gretsch Duo Jet that was his first good guitar. But he's basically stoic about downsizing his guitar collection.

"Sure there are some guitars I wish I still had," he admits. "Honestly, I wish I had every one that's gone. It would be a roomful, I'll tell you."

When it comes to amps, Martin's collection still has plenty of power to burn. It includes just about all of the most desirable vintage Marshalls from the company's 1967–1974 golden era, plus some 18-watt Marshall combos. To balance this out, he also owns a tweed-through-blackface potpourri of Fender amps.

"I've got a nice old Magnatone too," he adds. "It's got that sound that Lonnie Mack used on 'Wham' and 'Memphis' and stuff like that."

A true guitarist's guitarist, Martin has made superb use of all his gear over these many years. His lead work is an integral part of the Kentucky Headhunters' sound and style, and *On Safari* is rife with his incisive, barn-razing lead guitar intros and outros. And Martin is a master of terse, call-and-response lead lines that echo and suggest the vocal lines sung by one of the Headhunters' two lead vocalists, Richard Martin and bassist Doug Phelps.

Although the Kentucky Headhunters disappeared from the top of the charts by the mid Nineties, they're still going strong today thanks to a busy touring schedule and a loyal fan base. They recently completed their first-ever European tour and last year released *Meet Me In Bluesland*, their second album with legendary Chuck Berry pianist Johnnie Johnson. The energetic performances recorded for *On Safari* are proof that the band's unique country-rock hybrid style is very much alive and well. While a few members have come and gone over the years, the core triumvirate of Martin and the Young brothers has survived for an amazing 48 years. Few musical partnerships make it that far, especially once the hits stop happening. But the Kentucky Headhunters are a rare exception to that rule.

"We've gone through a few different stages," Martin reflects, "but the common denominator has always been the music. We've been lucky. We're like a family, and like every family we have a little spat now and then. But we love each other, and I think that comes through in the music." GA

STEELS AND WHEELS AND REELS

The obsessions of producer/guitarist Daniel Lanois include pedal-steel guitars, motorcycles, and recording technology.

WRITTEN BY MAC RANDALL // PHOTOGRAPHED BY TRAVIS SHINN

LONG BEFORE he became one of contemporary music's most respected producers—a three-time Grammy Award winner who's been behind the board for career-defining albums by U2, Peter Gabriel, Bob Dylan, and many others—Daniel Lanois was a slide guitarist. He started playing at age nine, thanks to the effective sales-pitch technique of a visitor to his family's house in Ancaster, Ontario.

"One day," Lanois remembers, "somebody knocked on my mom's door and said, 'Hi, I'm representing the local conservatory, and we want to know if you have any kids who like music.' She pointed at me and said, 'Yeah, that one over there, he likes music.' So I passed the aptitude test and the guy said, 'Okay, we teach accordion and slide guitar.' I said, 'Well, I'll take slide guitar.' The instrument that the conservatory provided was just an acoustic six-string with high action, but that was the beginning of it."

His choice of the slide proved to have some staying power. More than 50 years later, Lanois still pulls out a slide nearly every day, though now he generally applies it to one of his eight prized Sho-Bud pedal steels—four in his Toronto recording studio and four in his Los Angeles home. These are, of course, in addition to his collection of "normal" guitars, which includes a custom red early Sixties Gibson Firebird, a pair of butterscotch early Fifties Fender Telecasters, and a small family of Fifties gold-top Les Pauls.

"I admire the steel masters of the past, in country music and other styles," he says, "but I don't play like that. I slowed the thing down and found something else in the instrument. I like when it has a more gospel-type feel, like the way it's used to accompany singers in church. You play all that fast shit in church and they're gonna slap ya!"

On Lanois' latest solo album, the vocal-free *Goodbye to Language*, the pedal steel takes center stage throughout, accompanied only by Rocco DeLuca's lap steel (plus some occasional low tones from a Moog Taurus). "Rocco and I had been on the road in Europe for a while," Lanois explains, "and when we got back to the shop, we decided to just play for fun. I was on my 10-string Sho-Bud Pro 1 in a custom E major tuning, and Rocco had his lap steel tuned down to D, so he was able to handle a lot of bottom for me. I called out chords and we'd improvise for five to 10 minutes. If there was enough magic in a given performance when we listened back to it, I'd give it a name."

This being Lanois the studio maven, however, the

Lanois with his Erik Buell–designed Harley FXRs (left and center) and BMW HP2 Enduro (right).

recording of these duets was only the beginning of a long process of sonic tinkering that he calls "my dub work. Basically, I'd make samples of the steel guitars, take them out of the recording platform so they'd just float on their own, and start fucking around with them. I might change the octave, change the key, time-stretch, add some radical EQ, do 20 things until it sounds like it's got something special. Then I run the track and stick the sample back in where I grabbed it from, so you hear the original steel going *ding, ding, ding*, and then you suddenly hear this *awwwwww* operatic voice sound, which is what that same steel became through my manipulation. Sometimes the samples are more interesting than what we played, so I'll mute what we played for those six seconds because I'd rather the sample be celebrated instead of the average playing. That way we're not just piling a bunch of shit on top of mediocrity."

There were some basic ground rules underpinning Lanois' method, the most important being an allegiance to the order of time: "I remain loyal to chronology. I don't take the bit from the front and put it in the back. A given performance is sacred ground. Except for edits, but that's just removing dead wood. Call it 'interrupted chronology.'"

The final results, as can be heard on the 12 tracks that make up *Goodbye to Language*, are striking. Notes ring out for a time, then collide into each other; chords swell only to be abruptly cut off and replaced by others that sound like they were already in progress. Though the overall atmosphere is relaxed, the music's dynamics keep shifting so suddenly that it's impossible to remain comfortable for long. "I hear it as a mirror of what's going on in our culture," Lanois says. "We're constantly bombarded not only by information but by our own thoughts. Things shift more quickly in our minds now. I've made plenty of tranquil ambient records that will take somebody on a safe journey, but I didn't want to do that this time. I wanted to be pulling emotions out of people, and I didn't mind sudden changes in scenery, because that's the way life is."

> "I DIDN'T MIND SUDDEN CHANGES IN SCENERY, BECAUSE THAT'S THE WAY LIFE IS."

Lanois goes back a long way with the Sho-Bud Pro 1 he plays on *Goodbye to Language*. It was his first pedal steel, given to him in the late Sixties by his teacher, Canadian steel master Bob Lucier. "When Bob got me that guitar, he said, 'I'll put a pickup in it that's better than the original one,' and I agreed to anything he said! I never knew what brand it was, but it was a humbucker that looked a little bit like a Rickenbacker pickup. About two and a half years ago, that pickup just stopped working and my heart sank. I'd never heard a better one, and I assumed that was going to be a one-off in my life."

Without much hope, Lanois put in a call to pickup guru Seymour Duncan. "Seymour agreed to look at it, and he said that he could replicate it. Fantastic! He worked hard over a weekend and hand-wound a new pickup for me. We dropped it in the guitar, and it sounded amazing, more like a single-coil than a humbucker. So Seymour's been providing me with these pickups that I've put in all my Sho-Buds now. They don't have an official name, but I can't say enough about them. That one pickup going faulty turned out to be a blessing in disguise."

That's not the full extent of Lanois' pedal-steel customization. "Here's a trade secret," he says with a grin. "Sometimes I put the fingers of my right hand under the strings of the pedal steel as part of my muting technique. But I have very big hands, and Sho-Buds don't have enough

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room for me to do that. So for most of my guitars, I've had a luthier friend shorten the part of the body that the 'fretboard' lays on, dropping it lower by about a quarter-inch so I can get my fat fingers under the strings."

One other thing that Lanois loves as much as steel guitars is motorcycles. When *Guitar Aficionado* caught up with him, he'd just finished a 2,000-mile ride through the U.S. and Canada. Clearly, the serious accident he had on one of his bikes in California back in 2010—he suffered six broken bones, a cracked pelvis, and internal bleeding around his right lung—hasn't kept him down. "I'm more into riding than ever," he says. "There's something wonderful about the position that riding occupies in one's life, because there's not much that has changed about the iron horse. I mean, there are some lovely modern bikes, but you're still on two wheels going through the countryside. It's a little bit like the steel guitar in that sense. You have to practice with it and respect it and know that nothing about it is trendy. Some things live outside of time."

On those long cross-country jaunts, a man can get to thinking, and Lanois has clearly thought long and deep about the significance of the Harley-Davidson. "It's part of the history of rock 'n' roll in America," he notes, "that rebel stance that evolved with jazz and the Beat generation and led to the cultural revolution of the Sixties. But the funny thing is, it was never meant to be a rebel's ride. If you look at Harley's early advertising, there are pictures of these sweet couples going for a picnic!"

As with his pedal steels, Lanois keeps some of his bike fleet in Toronto and another portion in L.A. Principal among them are a quartet of Harley FXRs. "They were designed by Erik Buell," he says, "with a hand-welded frame that was too expensive to make, so they discontinued it in '95, but it was perhaps the best frame that Harley ever had. My main ride is an '88. I also have a very nice '76 Harley Shovelhead, which was rebuilt in L.A. by Troy Critchlow, the same guy who's in [*the recent California biker documentary*] *21 Days Under the Sky*. My street-fighter ride is a BMW HP2 Enduro that I completely stripped down and made a rocket out of—custom gas tank and everything."

It turns out that Lanois is even more of a tinkerer with his bikes than he is with his instruments and production gear. "I'm always trying to make improvements," he says. "I'm connected to a lot of welders, electric specialists, light specialists. Technology has really evolved in that department. With LEDs and otherwise, there's some very powerful lights to be had without drawing too much current from the battery. I'm always on Safari, looking to see what other people are doing with their bikes, who's got the best tires, who's got the best seats."

But Lanois' Internet surfing does have its limits. "I haven't been looking for instruments all that much," he says. "My fundamental guitars are such beauties that I'm not moved to go to Guitar Center and try something new."

Although Lanois isn't on the hunt for any more steel guitars, the singing of the steel will always occupy a primary sector of his universe. "The lap steel was the first electric guitar," he points out. "Essentially, people decided to electrify a Hawaiian guitar. There are so many beautiful lap steels in pawnshops everywhere because of the Hawaiian music craze in America. Then they fell into the hands of the blues people. It's a completely American invention." And Lanois has made expert use of it in his own music, not only in the jarring juxtapositions of *Goodbye to Language* but also in the beautifully haunted strains of his early solo albums *Acadie*, from 1989, and 1993's *For the Beauty of Wynona*.

By the time Lanois cut those records, he was a well-known producer, with credits that included Peter Gabriel's *So*, Bob Dylan's *Oh Mercy*, and two U2 albums, *The Unforgettable Fire* and *The Joshua Tree*. The latter pair were co-produced with ambient music pioneer Brian Eno, probably Lanois' most important collaborator and early artistic champion.

In 1979, fresh from working with David Bowie and Talking Heads, Eno happened to hear a tape that Lanois had produced, loved it, and called to book a session at the latter's Grant Avenue Studios in Hamilton, Ontario. It was the start of a partnership that would yield three Eno albums in quick succession: *On Land*, *Apollo*, and *The Pearl* (the latter a collaboration with pianist Harold Budd). When U2 requested Eno's services for *The Unforgettable Fire*, he agreed, then insisted that Lanois come along with him to Dublin for the sessions. The team stayed intact for *The Joshua Tree* and 1991's *Achtung Baby*, then reunited for two more recent U2 albums, *All That You Can't Leave Behind* in 2000 and *No Line on the Horizon* in 2009. On his own, Lanois has also produced discs by Neil Young, Emmylou Harris, Willie Nelson, the Neville Brothers, Sinéad O'Connor, and more, as well as additional albums for Dylan (1997's *Time Out of Mind*) and Gabriel (1992's *Us*).

Lanois has remained obsessed with recording almost as long as he has played the steel guitar. In the early Seventies, with the help of his brother Robert, he set up his first "professional" studio, a four-track setup in the basement laundry room of his mother's house in Hamilton. Their starting rate for producing local bands' demos was in the basement, too: $60 (Canadian) a day. "Even at that price, we didn't always get paid," Lanois says ruefully. "It wasn't much of a business." Clearly, something changed over time.

Looking back at those early days, Lanois becomes both philosophical and concerned about whether the musically inclined youth of the 21st century will have the opportunity to hone their craft the way he did. "I was a heavily committed teenager," he says. "I kept up with the guitar, and I had all my recording equipment at the same time. To find something you love when you're a kid is really important. I've got a few kids in my life now, and I can see evidence of the same passion. I talk about it quite a bit: What are you going to do with those wonderful years from nine to 19? If you have too many options, it can smother you, because you don't spend enough time on any given thing to get good at it. Being well-rounded is the death of art." GA

Modifications to Lanois' Sho-Bud pedal steels include custom Seymour Duncan pickups and deeper string clearance.

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Guitar Player EDITORS' PICK

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GUITAR WORLD PLATINUM AWARD

Eastern Intrigue

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY OF A DISASSEMBLED 1966 TEISCO SPECTRUM 5.

{ *BY FLIP SCIPIO* }

UNLIKE MY FIRST-EVER sighting of a Wandré Rock Oval guitar, I can't remember where I first became aware of the 1966 Teisco Spectrum 5. I do recall that I noticed a blue one in Les Blank's film of Ry Cooder's Moula Banda Rhythm Aces, recorded at the Catalyst in Santa Cruz. That guitar had its primary-color switch leitmotif swapped for something apparently more useful, but it was a Spectrum 5 nonetheless. Sleepy LaBeef is reported to have played one as well.

What catapulted this remarkable stereo guitar to broader awareness was either Eddie Van Halen's use of it in the 1988 monochrome video for the *OU812* track "Finish What Ya Started" or Larry DiMarzio's photo of Eddie cradling that same red Spectrum 5 on the February 1990 cover of *Guitar World* magazine. It was around that time that a Teisco Spectrum 5 showed up on a table at the Philadelphia Guitar Show with a card stuck between the strings that read: "Be Cool Like Eddie: $1,000."

A few tables downwind, I saw a dilapidated Spectrum 5 guitar suffering from a host of ailments. Aside from remarkable wear on the fingerboard and plastic pickup covers, it was missing half of its tailpiece—the oddball unit appeared to be a cocktail of Doc Kauffman's Vibrola and a Burns vibrato. But what really puzzled me was the red polyester finish that had a most unusual densely crackled patina. It was the kind of thing you'd expect to see on a plywood archtop guitar, like an early Fifties Gibson ES-5, but not on a Japanese relic lovingly frosted in bulletproof polyester. I considered making a purchase while ambling among the myriad distractions, but upon my return the guitar was gone.

Two years later, I fielded a call from my guitar scout saying he had picked up a Spectrum 5 for me, which turned out to be a Macy's shopping bag containing a completely disassembled guitar. Both the neck and body were inexplicably slathered in gray car spackle. I began a slow, almost meditative process of sanding off the Bondo, usually while on the phone. I don't know why I persisted, since a lot of parts were missing and the serpentine electrical wiring appeared to have been attacked by a skunk looking for grubs. Moreover, I had no idea what the electronics were supposed to do. I sent the pickguard with its six pickup coils and the rat's nest wiring to

my longtime savior Mike Koontz in Ferndale, Michigan, with a note that read "Help."

Imagine my surprise when, after several months of careful sanding, I came across a fleck of the original finish—a remarkably crackled dark red paint that I instantaneously reconnected to the guitar I missed at the Philly show. Somehow that hacked-up gakki found its way back to me. It was around this time that I noticed the ebony fingerboard was as badly worn as any maple fingerboard I'd ever seen, which probably meant that at one point this had been a good guitar that had received heavy use.

I repaired the damaged Philippine mahogany body, reattached the neck, and let it sit in my shop while I got on with doing things that paid the bills. A few years later, the revitalized pickguard returned with a note that said that the two mysterious choke coils in the circuit were most likely to indicate some sort of a low-impedance circuit design. Plug straight into the recording console? Surely they were jesting.

I never liked the combined bridge-and-tailpiece design of these guitars. Already hampered by the very low-angled headstock, the strings transferred a low amount of physical energy onto the six metal saddles, giving the guitar a quiet voice. Being in the unique circumstance of having a completely knackered and plundered Spectrum 5 gave me the only excuse possible to replace the original tailpiece arrangement with an anchored Tune-o-matic bridge and a Bigsby B5 vibrato tailpiece, whose front roller gives the strings the downward pressure on the bridge they needed to awaken our sleeping samurai.

After replacing the original shagged paperclips with some usable frets, a dramatic increase in sustain was audible without plugging the guitar in. This particular neck is an unusually thin three-piece maple composite crowned with a streaked ebony fingerboard with inlays that recall Roger Dean's "Floating Planet." The guitar sounds so good that I can't bear the thought of taking it apart to repaint it.

I recommend using two cords to connect the Spectrum 5 to two amps with the stereo switch engaged. Somehow it does sound better than going mono, especially playing anything by Sonny Bono, Yoko Ono, or Perry Como. GA

New York–based guitar repairman Flip Scipio thanks Mike Koontz and Danny C. and recommends Emotions and Math *by Margaret Glaspy.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF FLIP SCIPIO

THE REEL DEAL.

The **Replicator Tape Echo** from T-Rex Effects is the ultimate marriage of authentic analog warmth with practical, modern features. The only true magnetic tape delay pedal to feature tap tempo control, Replicator boasts two playback heads offering three modes of operation, while a chorus control allows you to add subtle pitch modulation to the delays. You also get master level, saturation, and standard delay controls, as well as a kill-dry switch. Two expression pedal inputs allow you to control delay time and feedback at your feet. Hand-made in Denmark, Replicator is road-worthy and stage-ready.

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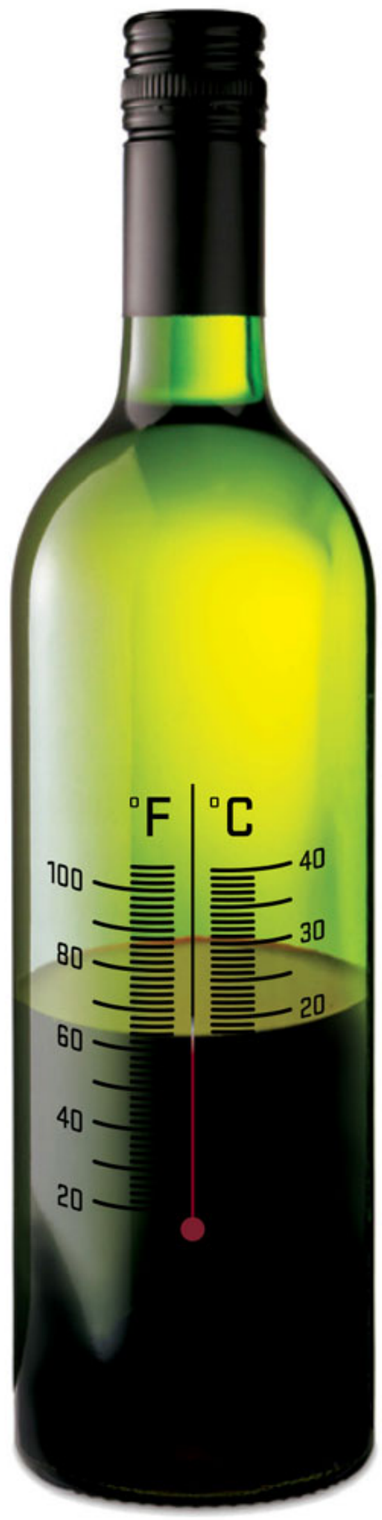
A Question of Degree

THE IDEAL TEMPERATURES FOR SHIPPING, STORING, AND SERVING WINES.

{ *BY CHRIS GILL, CWAS* }



IF YOU REGULARLY purchase wine online and prefer to save a few bucks by shipping via ground, you've probably become an amateur weather watcher who closely monitors temperatures across the country to determine the ideal window for shipping your wines. While most retailers and wineries will store bottles free of charge until safe shipping conditions prevail, there are a few exceptions who don't seem to care and will ship anytime of year. Then there are those who care seemingly too much and will stubbornly refuse to release your precious purchases until the increasingly rare periods (thanks to global warming, climate change, or abnormal weather patterns) when temperatures across the entire nation are projected to hover between 50 to 70 degrees for at least an entire week.

If you're a dedicated wine connoisseur or collector, you probably have also invested in a wine storage refrigerator or dedicated storage cellar, where you fastidiously transfer shipments upon arrival and where each bottle will reside for months, years, or even decades in consistent conditions until it is finally opened and consumed. The truly dedicated have separate units or sections where they can segregate red, white, and sparkling wines and store each at different temperatures.

Yet, although most wine collectors and connoisseurs are obsessive about wine temperatures up until the moment they crack open the cork, only a few pay proper attention to serving temperature, which may actually be the most important temperature consideration of all. There is a tendency for most consumers to drink wine at temperatures that are too hot (for reds) or too cold (for white and sparkling wines) to truly enjoy a wine at its best. Part of the problem is that guidelines for serving temperature have historically been rather vague, suggesting for example that red wines should be served at "room temperature" and white wines should merely be chilled.

In today's average heated and air-conditioned environments, "room temperature" generally means a range between 68 to 74 degrees. However, the "hottest" ideal serving temperature for any wine (generally robust reds or Port wines) is 65 degrees. "Chilled"—at least as it seems to be defined in modern American vernacular—is generally just a few degrees above freezing in a range of 34 to 40 degrees. Ideally, even the lightest white wines should not be chilled below 45 degrees, and many full-bodied whites like Chardonnay and Sémillon fare better when served around 50 degrees, as do most Rosé wines and aged vintage Champagne. I personally even prefer medium-body whites like Rieslings from Alsace and Vouvray served around 50 degrees as the warmer temperatures bring out the subtle minerality and enhance complexity.

Light red wines like Beaujolais, Blaufränkisch, and Nebbiolo fare quite well at temperatures that are colder than most reds are commonly served. The ideal temperature for these wines is 55 degrees, although I've enjoyed some young Beaujolais Cru and fruity Nebbiolo wines at slightly cooler temps. Pinot Noir and Burgundy wines fare the best between 55 to 60 degrees (the heavier the wine, the higher the temperature), as do higher quality oak-aged wines made from the Nebbiolo grape like Barolo and Barbaresco. Bold red wines such as Bordeaux, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Petite Sirah, and Syrah (particularly New World varieties) seem to be at their best between 60 to 65 degrees, although wines with notable heat from excess alcohol often taste better at even lower temps.

Since the ideal storage temperature for all wines is within a few degrees above or below 55 degrees, most white wines need only a brief one-hour visit to the kitchen refrigerator to reach ideal serving temperatures, or you can chill a bottle almost instantly by inserting it into a bucket of ice, water, and salt and vigorously rotating it for a few minutes. Pinot Noir and Burgundy can be served directly from the cellar, while bigger red wines can (and should) rest in a decanter for 30 minutes to an hour before serving to allow the temperature to rise gradually to an ideal serving range. GA

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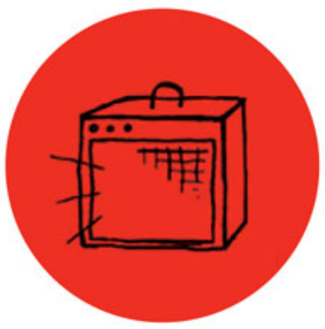

Current Affairs

A GUIDE TO NEW TUBES BEING MANUFACTURED TODAY.

{ *BY MITCH COLBY* }

WHEN I FIRST started working for the U.S. distributor of Marshall amps 38 years ago (man, that was hard to write!), my boss warned me that tube amps weren't going to be around much longer. He reasoned that very few products that used vacuum tubes were still being manufactured, and there just wasn't enough business to keep the tube factories going. During the Fifties, tubes were used in every consumer electronic product, including radios, TVs, and audio gear, but by 1978 the transition to solid-state was in full force, and tubes were found mainly in some guitar amps and high-end audio components.

During that time, most U.S. and European tube manufacturers either sold or were going to sell their tube-manufacturing operations to Asian or Eastern Bloc companies. Fortunately, the manufacture of tube guitar amps has enjoyed a healthy resurgence over the years, and interest in new amps and maintaining old amps is keeping tube factories operating in Russia, China, and the Slovak Republic.

Although they don't make tubes quite like they used to, the good news is that multiple brands and versions of just about every tube you will ever need for a guitar amp are currently being manufactured. The not-so-good news is that the quality can vary from month to month and from production run to production run. Many tube merchants test and match their tubes before selling them, but the quality of the testing and matching is not consistent from supplier to supplier. There are too many versions of guitar amp tubes to discuss here, so I'll focus on the ones I prefer.

12AX7: Since this is the most common tube in guitar amps, a wide variety of brands (including some resurrected old brands) are available to choose from. In Colby and Park amps, I use Tung Sol, Chinese, and JJ 12AX7 tubes, as well as the Sovtek 12AX7LPS. I typically use Tung Sols in the first preamp stage because they have a warm sound. I use JJs in tone driver/cathode follower stages and tube effect loops because they can handle the high cathode voltage. I also like Chinese 12AX7 tubes in the phase inverter because the bright tonal character adds a nice bite. The 12AX7LPS sounds great in the dtb50's overdrive channel. All of these brands tend to be reliable, although I get bad ones from time to time.

EL34: The Electro-Harmonix EL34 is a good choice that sounds great and is reliable. JJ EL34 tubes are very reliable and sound good too, but be careful to get EL34 tubes and not E34L tubes unless your amp was specifically designed for them. Tung Sols are good but a bit more expensive. Winged Cs are much more expensive, and since they are not being manufactured any longer, most that are still available come from the last production run and are of questionable quality.

EL84: I don't make amps with EL84 tubes, but I've heard good things about JJ EL84s. The standard Sovtek EL84 tubes also earn kudos, but recently the price went up significantly.

KT66: I use Gold Lions, which sound very good, put out the right amount of power, and are not expensive.

KT88: The Sovtek KT88 sounds very good and is not expensive. I've had a couple of failures, but the tone makes up for it. The JJs are very reliable, a little more expensive, and sound pretty good.

6550: I don't use them in my amps, but Ruby 6550 tubes are highly recommended by techs I know and trust, especially for use in amps like Ampeg SVTs that put considerable high-voltage strain on the tubes.

6L6: TAD offers a few varieties, and I have had good success with all of them. I like their RCA clones, such as the 6L6GC-STR and 6L6WGC-STR, which is about the size of a vintage 5881. Ruby Tubes makes some nice 6L6s as well. All of these are Chinese tubes that were designed with the help of Ruby and TAD. The Groove Tubes GE 6L6 clone is a unique design that sounds great and reminds me of the vintage Sylvania 6L6GCs, but they aren't particularly reliable. The Sovtek 5881 isn't really a 5881 or a 6L6, but it's still a great tube in its own right. It sounds good in many 6L6-based amps and is just about impossible to kill.

6V6: I like Ruby 6V6s. JJ 6V6 tubes are very reliable but don't sound like 6V6s to me.

5Y3: JJ's 5Y3 rectifiers are good, but they can rattle in a combo. The Sovteks rattle, and they put out too much voltage. Instead, I recommend buying NOS or even used USA 5Y3s. They were made in huge quantities, so they're still available and not expensive.

5AR4/GZ34: I use either Sovtek or Ruby, which are both reliable. GA

Mitch Colby helped develop many Marshall and Vox amp designs and is the founder of Colby Amplification.

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Café Player

Yamaha Revstar RSP20CR

BY PAUL RIARIO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

MY VERY FIRST proper guitar was a Yamaha FG Series acoustic. As a youngster who didn't know much about guitars, I bought that acoustic partly because Yamaha was an instantly recognizable brand, and its widespread reputation as a premier motorcycle, consumer electronics, and musical instruments manufacturer made it, for me, a sound choice. Of course, none of that mattered unless the product was actually great, and my Yamaha acoustic was, indeed, perfect for me at the time. Its combination of solid tone, vintage looks, and classic appointments had familiar appeal and served me well. What's more, it endeared me to Yamaha. I still have that guitar as well as my continued fondness for the brand.

Yamaha still produces impressive acoustic guitars today, and its electric guitars are equally as noteworthy. The company's classic SG/SBG series of guitars, with their "horned" double-cutaway design, were closely associated with Carlos Santana and were a favorite among players like Bill Nelson and Phil Manzanera. For that matter, the company's stalwart superstrat Pacifica series has remained in continuous production for more than 25 years. However, Yamaha guitars have all been inspired derivations of classic instruments—until now.

After three years of development and thoughtful refinement, Yamaha introduced the Revstar series of guitars, which take their styling cues from Japanese and British café racer motorcycles. It's a fitting influence, considering how Yamaha's renowned motorcycles still inspire awe. It's also clear that the Revstar series properly reflects a triumphant new design that is both original and attractive. Of the eight models in the Revstar series, I looked at the flagship Revstar RSP20CR, the only one handcrafted in Japan.

The RSP20CR is a custom guitar that's completely stripped down to the bare essentials and revved up (no pun intended) for high performance. Outwardly one part Les Paul and one part Yamaha SBG, the RSP20CR sports a substantial solid mahogany body and maple top but with an offset double-cutaway that frames the guitar with more polished style and modern dimension. While the back and neck are glossy, the top has a beautiful brushed black finish with two glossy racing stripes running down the center and a copper pickguard, all of which accelerate the RSP20CR's distinctive looks. The guitar features a set-in mahogany neck with a rosewood fingerboard, a 24 3/4–inch scale, and 22 jumbo frets. It's a sleek-feeling instrument, with a graceful belly contour on the back that hugs the body while removing some of the guitar's weight. The tapered neck carve is uniformly smooth and comfortable, and it's slim enough for your thumb to fret over the top of the fingerboard.

The two VH7+ vintage-output humbuckers feature Alnico V magnets and are controlled via a three-way lever switch, a master volume, and a master tone control, with the master tone control providing a push/pull function that engages Yamaha's proprietary Dry Switch technology, an innovative circuit that snuffs out the lower frequencies and channels in single-coil tones without the hum or drop in volume. The pickup covers have an antiqued brushed-nickel finish with a marbleized appearance, and that brushed-nickel look carries over to the control knobs, the TonePros AVT-II wraparound bridge with individually adjustable saddles, and the die-cast Kluson-style tuners.

What's immediately clear is that Yamaha has done its homework. There's no mistaking how seamlessly the company has combined contemporary and classic appointments that make this guitar a real stunner. The RSP20CR's asymmetrical design grants effortless access all the way up the fretboard if you like to cruise past the 15th fret. And if comfort is paramount, the guitar feels incredibly vibrant and broken in due to Yamaha's Initial Response Acceleration (IRA) technology, a proprietary process that ages the guitar internally to become more responsive.

But the best way to handle this guitar is to play loud, and I loved how the VH7+ humbuckers can quickly shift gears to sound wonderfully smooth for producing bell-like cleans and harmonically rich overtones when overdriven. There was plenty of gooey sustain whether I played in the neck position or needed more punch by switching over to the biting bridge humbucker. I also found the Dry Switch works well for toggling between cleaner response and ballsy power.

However you need to get from point A to point B, hopping onto the RSP20CR offers fluid playability and championship tone. GA

LIST PRICE: $2,800
Yamaha Guitars, yamahaguitars.com

RAW POWER Armando Vega from Yamaha Guitars reveals what makes the Revstar RSP20CR street lethal.

What were the most important design elements that influenced the Revstar Series?
Revstar embraces the concept of being a stripped-down, tuned-up high-performance package offering function, character, and style. Revstar's shape actually draws inspiration from classic Yamaha guitars, including the SBGs and the Seventies cult classic Super Flighter. The headstock is inspired by the classic SA-15 from 1968. Then there are subtle nuances, like the scratch plate, that echoes function-first custom parts fitted to café racer bikes.

Tell me about Yamaha's VH7+ pickups versus using aftermarket pickups?
All Revstar pickups are custom designed by Yamaha Guitar Development engineers in Hamamatsu, Japan. Dozens of pickup variations were tested to create the perfect tone for each Revstar model's character. The YGD V7 humbuckers, in particular, feature Alnico 5 magnets, German silver baseplates, and heavy formvar wire for rich, open, balanced tone. And of course there are the "antique nickel" pickup covers for looks that match the sound.

How much personal craftsmanship and calibration goes into the flagship RSP20CR?
Quite a bit, actually. They are made at Yamaha Music Craft (YMC), where we have been finely crafting musical instruments for over 128 years. YMC is at Yamaha's headquarters in Hamamatsu, Japan, and it's home to a special group of master craftsmen who produce high-quality instruments, like our hand-crafted acoustic guitars and our top-of-the-line SG series electrics, to name a few.

Cat Scratch Fever

2017 Jaguar F-Type SVR Coupe

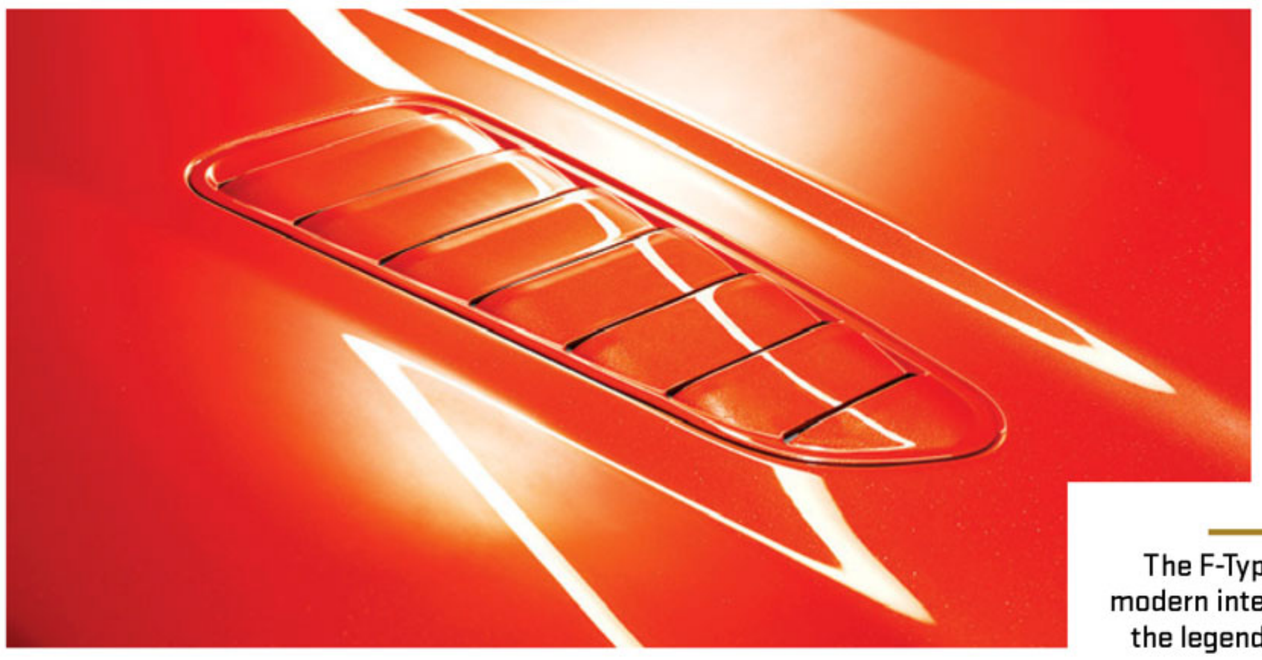
BY MIKE DALY

IF ONE PREVAILING current has consistently swept through the ripples of postwar automotive design, it might be the idea of the so-called "prestige car." Not necessarily a flagship but usually a well-appointed model of limited production, the prestige car has long provided automakers with an outlet to highlight their greatest capabilities and aspirations. From Buick's 1953 Roadmaster Skylark roadster to the VW Group's forthcoming Bugatti Chiron, successful manufacturers have rationalized the production of largely unprofitable boutique models to help sell their mass-market offerings. And as the term implies, these cars add a degree of status to the manufacturer's cachet in the process.

So when Indian commuter-car giant Tata acquired British sports-car maker Jaguar from Ford in 2008, the newcomer from the Asian subcontinent wisely recognized the merits of this strategy. The culmination of that thinking recently crowned Jag's defining model under the auspices of SVO, a new Special Vehicles Operation intended to hold court with departments like Porsche Exclusive and McLaren MSO.

As with any great supercar—and with a top speed of 200 mph, the F-Type SVR Coupe is undeniably that—a discussion of Jag's new world beater starts with a good story. As the yarn goes, a midlevel stylist on the design team named Cesar Pieri had sketched a roofless single-seat F-Type with a head fairing like the ones used on Fifties sports-racing cars (more specifically, like the one on the three-time Le Mans–winning Jag D-Type, one of which recently sold for nearly $22 million). He did this merely as a fun exercise and probably thought little more of it as he tacked the handsome sketch to the side of his cubicle.

His initiative was soon recognized in momentous fashion, though, when Jag's head designer, the accomplished Ian Callum, passed by his office and took note of the sketch, stopping to ask, "Hey, what's that?" The junior stylist explained it was his interpretation of the legendary D-Type as expressed through a modern F-Type, and one can imagine the pregnant silence that must have followed. Callum loved the idea, and within five months the design was under limited production for racing customers under the name Project 7. That car's specially tuned V-8, suspension upgrades, and aerodynamic tweaks have now been introduced to the production F-Type, resulting in the new SVR, the most powerful F-Type to date.



The F-Type SVR is a modern interpretation of the legendary D-Type.

Intended to be more of a useable supercar than a track specialist, the SVR is available with a host of luxury options and sits atop Jag's sports car range (the XKR and its brethren were quietly discontinued a few years back). Also available as a convertible, the F-Type SVR Coupe hits 60 mph from standstill in 3.5 seconds thanks to the latest supercharged incarnation of the company's long-running 5.0-liter V-8. The protracted gestational development has paid off, as the blown motor now produces 575 hp and 516 pound-feet of torque, more than enough to get our test car skipping through the unpredictable curves and cow chips of Monterey County's back roads during an exclusive Pebble Beach–timed introduction.

Jag used the iconic enthusiast car week on California's central coast as an opportunity to showcase the F-Type SVR, which promises to be the first of several forthcoming SVR models. If the gawking Monterey hordes were any indication, Jaguar has a hit on its hands. Case in point: As I revved the throaty motor for a nearly begging teenage pedestrian, I thought he was going to wet his pants when the titanium exhaust system throatily sang above 4,000 rpm.

The farming back roads that circle Salinas, complete with 5 mph combines and scattered piles of fertilizer, offered an ideal obstacle course to demonstrate the SVR's intelligent dynamic-stability-control system and optional $12,000 carbon-ceramic matrix disc brakes. With the SVR's unflappable technology superimposed over the Steinbeckian backdrop (including the processing plant of the Estancia wineries!), the high-speed drive was akin to a surreal video game—*Grand Theft Auto* as imagined by social agrarians, perhaps.

Still riding the same short wheelbase that proved so pleasing during our F-Type Convertible review [GA, *January/February 2014*], the SVR is impressively powerful yet eminently tractable. Like many such premium sub models, the car capitalizes on its extreme power by shaving weight where possible. A host of optional carbon-fiber upgrades can lower the SVR's mass by as much as 110 pounds from the runner-up F-Type R coupe. Most notable among these elements is a $3,200 carbon-fiber roof, though with matching center console and exterior pieces (hood louvers, front spoilers, and venturi blades), the combined carbon options total almost $8,000.

Drive quality and road connectivity are outstanding, as expected, benefiting from a standard all-wheel-drive platform that features an intelligent differential. This allows the rear-wheel drive elements to speak for themselves during straight-line acceleration (aerodynamically aided by a spoiler that deploys at 70 mph), while applying varying shades of front-wheel torque as needed to assist with grip and oversteer during hard cornering. A ZF eight-speed "Quickshift" transmission actuated by extra-large wheel-mounted paddles ably handles shifting duties, and while the choice of a torque converter–based automatic gearbox may lack F1 credibility, it helps keep the F-Type SVR Coupe's starting MSRP at a sub-exotic level.

There's no doubt the F-Type SVR is a convincing challenger to that longtime object of sports-car perfection, the Porsche 911 Carrera, offering a front-engine Anglican antithesis of similar proportions and price to the Teutonic stalwart. If it succeeds in fanning the sales of Jag's updated model lineup, one of unprecedented scale that now includes three sedans and an SUV, it would surely confirm the enduring power of the prestige car. GA

MSRP: Base, $125,950; at tested, $147,945

Jaguar Land Rover North America, LLC, jaguarusa.com

Rockin' the Park

Park Rock Head 50 amplifier

BY CHRIS GILL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

BECAUSE MARSHALL introduced the original Park brand amplifiers to bypass distribution restrictions during the Sixties, guitarists usually have viewed them as being simply rebadged Marshalls. This was mostly true in the beginning, but sometime during the mid-to-late Seventies Marshall designer Steve Grindrod began using Park as a platform to experiment with new circuits and designs. One of Grindrod's most ambitious designs was the 100-watt Park Model 1210 Rock Head, which was the first high-gain "Marshall," featuring two footswitchable channels that could be cascaded together, plus a post-phase inverter master volume (PPIMV). Although the Rock Head wasn't a commercial success, over the years it has gained a cult following, particularly among players who prefer more aggressive, "hot-rodded" Marshall tones.

Thanks to the recently resurrected Park brand, the venerated Rock Head lives again but with a few differences and improvements. The new Park Rock Head 50 has a 50-watt (rather than 100-watt) circuit featuring two EL34 and three 12AX7 tubes. It also has three push-pull knobs for greater tone-shaping flexibility, a dedicated footswitch jack, an effect loop, and a separate master volume control for the overdrive channel in addition to the PPIMV circuit for overall output. As a result, the amp provides the ability to switch between clean/crunch and overdrive tones and can produce any tone from crisp, punchy clean to aggressive, hot-rodded hard rock distortion.

Both channels share the same cathode-follower tone stack, which includes bass, middle, and treble controls plus a brightness (presence) control. Further tone and gain shaping is provided by the push-pull functions of the volume, gain, and treble controls. When the volume control is pulled out, it engages a bright setting on the clean channel only. Pulling out the gain control makes the overdrive warmer and mellower, while pulling out the treble control places a series resistor/capacitor across the gain control to make the overdrive voice more aggressive. The gain and treble controls' push-pull functions provide four different tone/gain combinations that range from rich blues overdrive (gain pulled out, treble pushed in) to fiery, sustaining high-gain distortion (gain and treble pulled out).

While the control panel looks quite simple, the Park Rock Head 50 is as tonally versatile as many modern amp heads. However, it still retains the outstanding harmonic complexity and dynamic responsiveness of a classic vintage Marshall thanks to its "less is more" design. The head matches best with a 4x12 loaded with Celestion Creambacks, but it also performs well with Vintage 30s as well as similar British-voiced speakers from Scumback and Weber. Whether you love the underrated clean tones of a Marshall (from Hendrix to Jamie West-Oram), AC/DC-style crunch, bluesy overdrive á la Clapton and Bonamassa, or the searing high-gain distortion of Schenker to Slash, the Park Rock Head 50 does it all. GA

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Driving Passion

JAMES FRAHER FLOORS IT WITH MISSISSIPPI BLUES GUITARIST T-MODEL FORD.

VETERAN PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES FRAHER, who took this image of the late Mississippi bluesman T-Model Ford in 1992, played in rock bands before photography became his calling. Eventually, he followed the classic baby boomer's route into the blues. "We played songs that the Stones and Animals did," he says. "When you start looking at the liner notes of their albums, you'll see that Willie Dixon wrote some of those songs." Around 1968, he recalls, a friend invited him to see Muddy Waters perform in Chicago. "That was the first time I saw a live blues performance," he says.

Eventually, Fraher would photograph blues artists for publications like the *Chicago Reader* and *Living Blues*, as well as for album covers. When he and his camera caught up with T-Model Ford, the blues guitarist was still five years from recording *Pee-Wee Get My Gun*, his debut album for the Fat Possum label.

"It was the day after T-Model performed at the '92 Chicago Blues Festival," Fraher recalls. "I went to his hotel to photograph guitarist Robert Ward for the cover of *Living Blues* magazine. After I finished that, I ran into T-Model. I set up a backdrop and light in his room and photographed him, as well as pianist Boogaloo Ames, guitarist and singer Eugene Powell, and the singer Cora Fulker. They all took turns passing around T-Model's guitar, singing songs and posing for photographs. There was a bit of a house party going on."

Fraher had first met Ford and heard him perform in 1988, and he was happy to reconnect with the bluesman in Chicago. "Many of these musicians hadn't been paid a lot of attention at the time, especially some of the folks from down South" says Fraher, who today runs the graphic design/photo service company Bogfire with his wife, Connie Scanlon. "In '92, it was probably T-Model's first trip up from Mississippi to Chicago. This is most likely the beginning of when he was starting to play in front of larger audiences. I found him an interesting subject and I wasn't going to miss a chance to shoot him. It's always a thrill to sit at the feet of a great performer, doing a photo session as they're playing." —*Alan di Perna*

Signed, limited-edition prints of this photo—and additional images by James Fraher—are available from rockpaperphoto.com.

PHOTOGRAPH BY **JAMES FRAHER**

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